

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 22 April 2004

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 22 April 2004

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

Cultural Review

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a statement by Frank McAveety on the cultural review. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement and there will be no interventions.

09:30

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety): I thank the members who have made themselves available at this early hour.

Today is the start of a new era for Scotland's culture. I know that both the cultural sector and my parliamentary colleagues have been waiting for the launch of our review of culture: it begins now.

The review of the cultural sector is, in my opinion, a once-in-a-generation opportunity. It is a precious opportunity to consider seriously and maturely the place and provision of culture in Scotland and to decide the best ways in which to ensure its future support.

On St Andrew's day last year, the First Minister, Jack McConnell, set out a vision for cultural provision in Scotland. The core vision was of each citizen securing the right to access to and excellence in our diverse culture and the right to pursue the means of fulfilling whatever talents might be within them.

The message of his speech was greeted warmly by those within and outwith the cultural sector, and we intend to deliver on the aspirations and inspiration behind the speech. Politicians had spoken before, extolling the importance of culture for its own sake and its ability to inspire. However, in that speech, we had for the first time a reflection on the essential nature of cultural activity and on the fact that there is not a single part of our physical, intellectual and emotional lives that cannot be touched in some way by exposure to and experience of cultural activity.

The First Minister said:

"Let's agree the centrality of cultural activity to all aspects of our lives – why it's important and how it can revitalise us individually and as a national community."

Since that landmark speech, we have been giving careful consideration to how we can make that vision a reality. We had established a partnership commitment to deliver a review of the cultural sector within Scotland and we have had to

consider the best way to ensure that the review can have maximum reach and impact, engage the greatest number of citizens in Scotland and benefit from the immense experience and brilliance of our creative communities. How can we ensure that people from all branches of the arts, heritage and creative industries, and from national bodies, local government and the private and voluntary sectors, can take part?

Instead of just doing a standard review, the purpose of my discussion and deliberation has been to think of a more effective way to engage in the review and to consider the form and process of the consultation. Consultations are often engineered or developed and they have their place, but sometimes they fail to penetrate beyond the usual people whom we would expect to make a contribution. Given that we have this once-in-a-generation opportunity, it would be unforgivable to make that mistake when it comes to something as intrinsically important in the lives of the people of Scotland as culture, which is fundamental. I strongly believe that the opportunity to make a change in how we view cultural provision deserves a far more innovative approach.

I want those whom we would expect to make a contribution to respond and to take part, and of course they will do that; they are some of the brilliant people that I mentioned earlier in my speech. However, they are not the only ones. There are many others who have tried to make their voices heard in the recent past and who have not always felt that they have achieved that. We would like many other voices to be heard much more effectively on cultural activity and development in Scotland.

I share the commitment that the First Minister identified to see culture as a rich source of inspiration and enjoyment. Therefore, I have decided that we should establish a new independent body, a cultural commission, which will undertake the review in full consultation and partnership with the people of Scotland. I have asked James Boyle, who is currently chair of the Scottish Arts Council, to chair the commission. He will be remunerated at the same rate as attaches to his SAC post. I know that James is respected by many in the cultural community—his experience and background indicate that. I have also been impressed by the work that he has undertaken so far with the SAC. He has decided—with me, and rightly in my opinion—to stand down as chair of the SAC on taking up his post at the commission. We shall take steps quickly to fill that vacancy.

The other members of the commission will also need to be selected carefully to provide the right blend of expertise and knowledge. I expect that there will be a small core membership, which may

establish sub-groups for specific strands of business.

The other appointments will be made once the commission's chairman has been able to scope its full work in further detail and to consider the available candidates. We will aim to make a further announcement in time for the commission to get down to business from the beginning of June.

People may ask why there is to be a commission and how it will work. I see some clear advantages in establishing a commission to carry out the cultural review.

The commission's members will be highly experienced people who understand Scotland's rich and complex cultural landscape. An external commission, drawn from the wider community, will be best placed to listen to the cultural sector and to understand what it tells them. Its members will also know who the many different stakeholders are—they are not always those who occasionally see themselves as the singular stakeholders in Scotland's culture.

In my opinion, the commission will be able to look beyond and to confront stereotypical notions of culture. It will be asked to employ innovative and radical thinking in the work that it undertakes. I will look to the commission to use some of that innovative skill to develop new ways of involving more people in cultural activity in Scotland. When they have done all that, by June next year, I will welcome their recommendations on how we can deliver the St Andrew's day vision for developing access and excellence in Scotland's cultural life. I want to look forward to a positive 21st century solution for a sector whose governance, in many cases, developed over many decades in the previous century.

Our future support for culture must harness all the available resources in ways that deliver best value. In this context, best value means trimming unnecessary bureaucracy and ensuring that the maximum possible level of resources is directed to cultural activity and to unleashing the innate creativity of people throughout Scotland.

When I served in local government, as a convener of arts and culture and then as a leader of a local authority, maximising resources was always a challenge and collaboration, co-ordination and co-operation were vital. There are many excellent examples of how local government has faced that challenge in the cultural sector. I expect the commission to draw on and to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience in local government.

The creativity of Scots—from the classroom to the boardroom—is the edge that we need in a competitive world. Our duty as an Executive is to

enable the conditions to be developed to allow creativity to flourish—whether in arts, science, commerce or industry.

The First Minister said:

"If we can all work together, it could result in the most extraordinary release of talent and, crucially, a stronger, more vibrant and confident country."

That is an aim that I think everyone in the chamber shares. He continued:

"We would be recognised around the world as a creative hub – a powerhouse of innovation."

That is a bold aim, but it is achievable if we have the right infrastructure to deliver it.

The commission has an important task to perform; I am confident that James Boyle and the members who are appointed in the coming weeks will be equipped to deliver. Today I will also publish an Executive statement that sets out the policy framework and the terms of reference for the commission's work. Those should be available today and I urge members to study them. We are embarking on important business, which may well lead in due course to the introduction of legislation for the Parliament to consider.

We will consider all the action that we must take to bring our arrangements for cultural provision into the present century. We will do that from a position of first principles. We need to be clear about where we want to be and how we can get there. Therefore, in my opinion, we first need the review: to take stock, to look again at our cultural infrastructure and to ask whether it is fit for purpose. I believe that we can do better with what we already have.

On the principles, we must foster the innate creativity of our young people and energise a new generation by creating the conditions that encourage them to realise their cultural potential. Many members of the Parliament go to schools in their constituencies and regions on constituency and parliamentary business. They see the benefits that young people get from creativity. I want the commission to consider ways in which good examples of that can be made more widespread throughout Scotland.

The review of the cultural sector will take as its starting point the premise that each person in Scotland has rights of access to cultural activity. I want us to work towards more equitable cultural provision for people in Scotland regardless of where they live, how old they are or how much money they have.

To achieve that, I believe that a basic shift may be required in our cultural, political and administrative agencies to change the way in which they approach and deliver what they do. As I mentioned, collaboration, co-operation and co-

ordination are strengths that we must learn to maximise in all sectors of government and across the cultural sector.

I have already had a series of discussions with many of my ministerial colleagues about the way in which investment in culture can improve Scotland. I hope that those discussions will result in positive developments. There needs to be a similar dialogue across the private and voluntary sectors, which bring so much to our cultural infrastructure in Scotland.

Make no mistake: the work that I have launched today ranks as one of the most crucial undertakings of this Executive's partnership programme. I have briefly outlined our policy; the commission will now provide practical recommendations on how we may implement it. If legislation is required, we will publish a culture bill by 2007. Throughout all the above—policy, practice, legislation—the key values of access and excellence will be the guiding principles. No longer do I wish to have the tired debate that access is traded for excellence, or excellence for access. We have the capability in Scotland, among the agencies, institutions and individuals that make up our cultural sector, to ensure that both of those principles are enshrined in what we do.

The Scots writer Thomas Carlyle summed up many of our intentions when he wrote that the great law of culture is,

"Let each become all that he was created capable of being."

That is what we want for all of Scotland's society, for this generation and generations to follow.

As one of our best young playwrights, David Greig, a recent winner of the SAC creative Scotland award, said when asked about his work:

"the real effects begin to emerge 10 to 15 years down the road ... you keep emitting your message or calls like a whale swimming in some vast ocean ... hoping that someone somewhere, will get the message."

Our message is that we can make a difference to Scotland's cultural future. Each of us in this chamber and beyond has a responsibility in shaping Scotland's cultural future.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I will allow around 20 minutes for that process.

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): Presiding Officer, I apologise for arriving 30 seconds late. Unfortunately, that came about because we were still waiting for a copy of the statement at 9.20. I have had a bit of speed reading to do, so I hope that the minister will forgive me if my questions are a little broad-brush as a result.

How does the minister see the review relating to the cultural strategy of a few years ago, about which there was a great deal of debate and some criticism? It would be useful for us to understand how the two are to mesh.

We need some blue-sky thinking, but I am not entirely clear how the review will deliver that. How will the minister ensure that the members of the commission are not just the usual suspects? We do not want to see coming out of the review a repeat of some of the things that we have always seen. We need something new.

On membership of the commission, I make a personal plea that the traditional arts and music be directly represented on the commission, because in the past they have often missed out on cultural discussions in Scotland.

There are two specific issues in creating a truly effective cultural medium in the country. There is the process of creating in the first place what might be called the cultural artefact, and there is the process by which access to it is delivered. Is the review to be about both those aspects of cultural life? If we end up concentrating on only one, we risk there being a severe imbalance in the way in which things are delivered. I suppose I am asking the minister to be clear about whether he can guard against the review just becoming an exercise in moving furniture, and instead ensure that it becomes something far more serious and long term for the future of Scotland's cultural life.

Mr McAveety: I apologise for the late delivery of the speech, but I thought that it was important to get the David Greig quote into it, which I came across earlier this morning on the train.

Roseanna Cunningham asked some important questions about the core issues. I want to identify ways in which I can respond positively to them. The commission's work needs to be rigorous and far reaching. The commission must examine critically those sectors that feel that they have not in the past been brought to the table and heard on an equal basis with other diverse voices. I do not want to say that particular cultural sectors will be represented on the commission. The work of the commission is to reach out, invite submissions, engage with individuals and examine innovative ways in which voices can contribute.

I assure Roseanna Cunningham that I expect that the work that the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on Scottish traditional arts has done will be part of the commission's consideration. There are individuals in that group, as well as in the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish contemporary music industry, of which I have been a member, who can be involved in a dialogue to raise aspirations. There is no doubt that there are real opportunities

for traditional music and arts in terms of not just broader cultural sustainability, but positive economic and tourism outcomes. One of the key themes that the commission will examine is how we connect culture and creativity and develop enterprise, and how we maximise the benefits from that.

On the difficult philosophical question of the role of the review—is it a structural review or is it about creating space for artists to develop and flourish?—I do not want to prescribe to the commission how the review should develop. I hope that the commission will examine critically that important question because, like Roseanna Cunningham, over the years I have become tired of the way in which debate on the arts in Scotland becomes polarised and of the fact that we cannot encourage innovation, radicalism and the challenging aspects of individual artists or groups of artists while also having a structural debate about institutions such as the Scottish Arts Council and national organisations and bodies.

I want the commission to get to the heart of questions that have not been asked or examined enough in Scotland over the past 10 to 20 years. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the situation. I hope that that principle can shape the commission's work over the next year, so that it addresses many of the issues that Roseanna Cunningham and I are concerned about.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands (Con)): I thank the minister for the statement. I got it only five minutes before he delivered it, so I have done my best.

I agree with the minister when he says:

"Our future support for culture must harness all the available resources in ways that deliver best value ... best value means trimming unnecessary bureaucracy".

However, I question whether setting up a new commission will trim that bureaucracy. Where will the minister trim bureaucracy?

Will the members of the commission consider new methods of funding arts companies such as Scottish Opera, so that that icon of Scottish excellence can flourish and continue to delight, rather than lurch from crisis to crisis?

Will the minister do more to encourage Scotland's visual arts sector, by attracting more of the international arts world to Scotland? Does he accept, as he has already mentioned, that traditional music is a thriving area of Scottish culture? Will he give more recognition to the excellent accordion and fiddle clubs that play a huge part in Scotland's culture? In particular in the Highlands and Islands, they are keeping traditional Scottish culture alive. Will he do more to attract film makers to Scotland, so that more films and

television programmes can be made here?

Mr McAveety: It would be wrong of me to prescribe fully what the commission should examine, but I expect that over the next year some of the big questions that Jamie McGrigor asks will be examined critically. We have to get beyond the issues of individual organisations or companies not being able to meet their aspirations with the resources that they have, or issues about how they handle those resources. Sometimes the handling of those resources has a knock-on impact on investment in other cultural and arts sectors. We need to achieve fairness.

I expect the commission to examine ways in which the heritage, visual arts and screen industries can all be developed more effectively to ensure that we can make a genuine difference for the future. It would be wrong to lay down prescriptions on those issues today, but I would expect the commission to undertake a rigorous assessment and to invite views not just from those who are already in the sector, but from folk who want to have a greater role in cultural development in Scotland.

How can we grow the cultural sector by using better links between sectors? Too many of our institutions and organisations still operate in silos. We need to break that down and see how they can collaborate and co-operate more effectively to deliver a much better future for the sectors about which they care most passionately.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Like all back benchers, I did not receive an advance copy of the statement, but I too will do my best.

Does the minister agree that many creative pursuits are businesses, as well as cultural activities? I highlight the Scottish music business as one example. The music industry has suffered in the past from either no Government recognition or support or, more recently, from that support being channelled through arts rather than enterprise funding.

Given the hesitant steps that we are making to address that deficit, will the minister ensure that the cultural review considers the economic impact of our creative industries as well as their cultural benefit? Will he ensure that he continues to work with ministerial colleagues from the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department to further policy on that issue?

Mr McAveety: I commend Ken Macintosh for his work in the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish contemporary music industry. With Pauline McNeill and other colleagues, he has been raising big questions through that group.

I have two immediate answers. First, I continue

to discuss with Jim Wallace, the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, the crossover with enterprise issues and ways in which we can work more effectively. I will certainly raise the issues that Ken Macintosh raises at a forthcoming bilateral meeting. Secondly, we need to engage and interface more effectively with the music industry. The issue is not only about performance, but about producing and sustaining talent in Scotland. We need to create an infrastructure in Scotland that will allow people to survive here longer rather than journey to London or the United States, although that can be a welcome move economically for the individuals who do so. As I said in response to Roseanna Cunningham on the issue of traditional music, I would welcome the commission's engagement with key people, including the cross-party group on contemporary music, which has been working hard on the issues.

The commission will not have all the answers, but it will try to get underneath the issues and to examine in detail not only questions that have been asked before and not fully answered but questions that have not been asked before. The Executive will continue to support the sectors that we have supported until now. I give a commitment to continue to engage with Ken Macintosh on the issues, as I have done in the past.

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): The setting up of a commission is a good idea that will receive wide support. I welcome the concept of individual rights to culture.

Will the minister ensure that the commission listens to and responds adequately and imaginatively to the wide range of community or grass-roots arts activities? Will he ensure that the commission takes into account dozens of different art forms from throughout the country, such as local choirs, orchestras and operatic societies and community drama, folk-singing, dance, art and craft groups? There is a wide range of activities, so it will be difficult to get a grip on the diffuse problems, but in many cases, a little bit of help, such as liaison with schools or a small amount of money, would be effective. Will the minister consider the approach of the Edinburgh festival fringe, which is hugely successful because the minimum amount of organisation enables everyone to do their own thing?

Mr McAveety: I expect the commission to address many of the issues that members have raised. The Enterprise and Culture Committee is considering the role of community and grass-roots arts organisations in developing cultural activity in Scotland. I am sure that the committee will make a positive contribution that will feed into the commission's work.

An incredible wealth of experience exists among

individuals and communities who have worked together to develop arts projects throughout urban, rural and island Scotland to try to retain cultural identity and history in communities. I stress the positive, enterprising and interesting developments in the folk festival in Shetland and in the fèis movement in the Highlands, which I hope to experience next weekend. The critical issue is how we can harness the incredible energy in the voluntary arts sector to ensure that it shapes and influences the future direction of cultural policy. The commission will get more to the heart of that issue than a conventional consultation exercise would. I hope that the process, which will take more than a year, will produce positive recommendations for ministers to examine.

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): I draw members' attention to my entry in the members' register of interests: I am a playwright member of the Writers Guild of Great Britain and a board member of Borders Youth Theatre.

Many of us welcomed Jack McConnell's statement on St Andrew's day. We need a cultural strategy that provides international-standard artists, arts organisations and institutions and we need to give everyone in Scotland the chance to get involved in the arts. However, that cannot be achieved with standstill funding to the Scottish Arts Council, which is the current situation. Will the minister give an assurance that the cultural review will have as part of its remit an examination of funding levels for the arts?

Scottish Opera has been mentioned. Will the minister consider seriously the suggestions by Equity and the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union, which would enable Scottish Opera to continue to employ Scottish artists and to bring opera to the maximum number of new audiences in Scotland while paying off its deficit?

Mr McAveety: I await with interest the commission's recommendations on resource allocation. I cannot pre-empt the commission's work or the discussions that the Executive will have as part of the spending review. We are investing in Scottish arts and providing more resources than ever before. The annual grant for the Scottish Arts Council will be almost £40.2 million by 2005-06. In addition, we are providing extra resources for the development of the national theatre, a move which Chris Ballance welcomed when we announced it. The Executive has a good record on resource allocation and commitment to the arts and culture.

The key issue that the commission will consider is how we can maximise existing resources more effectively throughout the sector. That can be done, and the commission will examine the matter in detail. If our national institutions collaborate and

co-operate more effectively, resources will be found for the front line. We can reorganise how we do business. The statutory basis on which many organisations are established is rooted in a pre-war model of governance, which is not suitable, given the demands that the Parliament has placed on institutions during the past four years. That is understandable, as the Parliament is a new democratic channel. We must also take into account the expectations of the public, who are much more aware of what their rights and entitlements should be. Our institutions should try to respond to that.

If Chris Ballance will forgive me, I cannot give a categorical assurance on Scottish Opera, largely because we are still examining the business plan that the Scottish Opera board has presented to the Scottish Arts Council, which is the holding body under the grant mechanism. I have responded to a number of letters from members about the submission from the representative unions. I assure members that I have had an honest and clear discussion with trade union representatives about the long-term future. The two immediate principles are that we need a sustainable future for opera in Scotland, but that Scottish Opera must recognise that many other companies have been given resource allocations and have met their obligations from within them.

We must ensure that we have a variety of art forms in Scotland. I value the role of Scottish Opera, not only in producing stage performances, but in the development work that is done in schools and throughout the country through which opera is brought to youngsters. We aspire to maintain that situation, but how we can do so is a matter for serious and tough discussions. I assure Chris Ballance that I have at the forefront of my mind the sustainability of opera in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: From now on, we will need snappier questions and answers to try to get in most members who have requested to speak.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): I welcome the minister's statement, particularly the strands of increasing access and equitable provision and maintaining excellence. I have received several letters about Scottish Opera. Will the minister say more about how we will increase access to cultural provision in Scotland? I am thinking of galleries and museums throughout Scotland, such as the Smith Gallery in Stirling, which do a lot of work in schools to introduce pupils to the cultural life.

Mr McAveety: One of the messages in my statement was that national organisations need to think much more about their responsibility to citizens and the wider public. That issue must be at the forefront of the deliberations. Scottish local government has a critical role in that. Many people have good experience of challenging assumptions

about how services should be delivered. We must try to consider ways in which customers or individuals who receive services can be much more involved. Certainly, the work that is being done by galleries is trying to ensure that there is an engagement with that process. Again, some of the individuals who will be involved with the commission will have experience that can make a contribution in that regard.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am delighted that the minister is pushing to ensure that culture has as central a position in the Government as it has in our lives.

How the members of the commission are recruited is of concern, as we must ensure that the commission comprises a wide range of people. The minister will recognise that, before the commission can report, it must be understood that the major concern in the arts community is the shortage of cash in many sectors and that, therefore, some form of entry to the budgetary process before 2007 is necessary to make that work. Does the minister have any comments to make on that point? How does the commission's work relate to the cultural strategy that was published by the previous Administration?

Mr McAveety: I envisage the commission comprising a relatively small number of people. As such, it cannot be absolutely representative of the diverse cultural and non-cultural strands in Scotland. As the position statement says, we want it to engage effectively and thoroughly with many of the organisations, people and areas that Mr Gibson has identified in his previous contributions on the subject of culture. People's credibility and quality will be the primary reason for their selection for the commission, rather than their background or geographical location.

On the question of resources, I say that, like Rob Gibson, I have a passion for arts and culture. I will argue the case in the Cabinet and the chamber about the centrality of arts and culture in our lives and the way in which it impacts on the quality of our lives. There will always be demands for resources from other areas of public policy; all I can do is make a contribution to the debate about resources and attempt to influence, inspire and persuade colleagues in that context.

Since the 2003 election, we have made progress on many of the issues that Mr Gibson has raised. The commitment that the First Minister gave in his St Andrew's day speech was a strong signal of the political support for this area. Obviously, that has concomitant demands on the arts sector, as Mr Gibson and I are well aware. However, we will try to develop our ideas in that regard in the coming period.

A few members have made points about the

cultural strategy. The cultural strategy was a summation and an examination of where we were in 1999-2000. In the three or four years since then, the Executive and the Parliament have identified a number of issues that the commission can genuinely examine. Already, we have made shifts in the nuance of the cultural strategy in relation to traditional and contemporary music, because of my personal interest in those issues, and in relation to literature and writing, which we are trying to utilise more effectively in Scotland. However, that is a continuation of what we have already done.

The cultural strategy resulted in some substantial achievements, but we want to move on and undertake a dramatic, innovative and radical examination of what we do over the next 15 to 20 years and beyond.

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I give a cautious welcome to the proposed new cultural commission. However, I am not exactly sure how the new body will differ in scope and role from the Scottish Arts Council. If the SAC is to remain in place, will there not be a doubling-up of effort that will lead to still further bureaucracy in what some see as an already over-bureaucratic system of administration in Scottish culture?

I support the notion of having a culture bill, but I question why it should take until 2007. I would expect that it would be possible for us to have some sort of results and some sort of bill before then.

Mr McAveety: I have achieved something this morning if I have received a cautious welcome from Ted Brocklebank, and I thank him for that.

The commission is time limited. It will operate for the next 12 months in order to deliver some serious and critical recommendations about the overall structure, organisation and processes of cultural development activity in Scotland. It will not sustain itself beyond that year. The critical issue is to identify the ways in which existing arts organisations—the Scottish Arts Council, which is responsible for the key development of cultural strategy as well as grant disbursement, and our other national and local cultural agencies—carry out their work and to engage with them.

The commission does not represent a doubling-up of bureaucracy. It will be a time-limited, tightly focused team of people who will ask serious and far-reaching questions that have not been fully examined in the past 10 or 15 years. The commission will probably say some challenging things—we will have to wait and see what the outcomes are—but I welcome the work that will be undertaken over the next 12 months. The experience that James Boyle brings from his work in the Scottish Arts Council and in public sector

broadcasting will help us to identify ways in which we can deliver a different type of cultural structure that fits the needs and demands of this century rather than last century.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I welcome the establishment of the cultural commission under James Boyle. It is time for the initial work of the cultural strategy to be taken forward.

The minister will be aware of my interest in culture in education. The importance of culture in raising pupils' self-esteem and attainment levels is shown by the fact that creativity is now enshrined in our national priorities for education. Could the minister comment on the success of the school cultural co-ordinators programme and state whether the intention is for that programme to be rolled out? Will he be making a contribution to the current review of the curriculum in Scottish schools? Does he agree that it is important that, as well as getting additional money for culture, we should ensure that funding for culture is embedded across the spending of all the various departments of the Executive?

Mr McAveety: Like Rhona Brankin, I am passionately committed to the role that culture, arts and creativity can play in the development of young people. The speech that the First Minister made on St Andrew's day and the speech that I have made today contain principles that will be thoroughly examined through the commission's work.

The work of the cultural co-ordinators programme, which was pioneered by Rhona Brankin and others in the culture sector, has brought substantial benefits to the schools and local authority areas that have engaged with it. We would like the programme to be one of the key features of our development of cultural activity across schools in Scotland.

I am currently involved in bilateral discussions with the Minister for Education and Young People on the role that culture can play in the curriculum in terms of attainment, achievement, self-confidence and other issues that we have identified in many debates in this chamber. We believe that the commission will make a helpful contribution in relation to those issues. Like Rhona Brankin, I believe that it would be welcome if the commission's inquiry resulted in additional resources for culture in schools.

The Presiding Officer: My regrets to members who were not called. I have allowed an extra six minutes.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Yesterday's *Business Bulletin* did not say that there was going to be a statement on this subject and I found out only late last night that there was going to be one.

I have an interest in this issue but did not have an opportunity to notify you of that fact. I would have thought that we should have had a wee bit more notice that there was going to be a statement this morning.

The Presiding Officer: I will make inquiries on that point and come back to you when I have further information.

Mental Health

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-1184, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on mental health, and three amendments to the motion.

10:08

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Malcolm Chisholm): The Executive and its many partners have a strong commitment to mental health in Scotland. I am confident that that commitment is shared by all of us.

This morning, I want to share with members some of the work that we are taking forward across the Executive and with our partners. It is appropriate that we have this debate in national depression week. Estimates show that depression will directly affect one in five of us at some point in our lives. It is a common illness but one that need not devastate lives. The aim of national depression week is to raise awareness about the realities of depression and to reduce the stigma associated with it. If we achieve those aims together, we can play a significant part in encouraging people to seek help at an early stage and improve their chances of recovery.

Getting our policies right on mental health provides us with a great opportunity in Scotland. Mental health is far more than the absence of mental health problems and mental illness. It is about how we think and how we feel about ourselves, how we interpret the world around us and how we relate to others. Good and positive mental health is an essential component of our overall health and well-being; if we improve our mental health, our overall health and well-being are significantly enhanced. We therefore gain huge benefits from working together to create a more mentally healthy Scotland.

At the same time, we need to be aware of the impact and the potentially devastating effects of mental health problems. We know that people with mental health problems die younger, live poorer-quality lives, are more likely to live in poverty and are far less likely to be in work. The economic impact in Scotland is estimated to be nearly £8 billion per annum. It can be no surprise, then, that since the birth of the Parliament we have made mental health a priority and introduced the most progressive mental health legislation in Europe. We have made a start on developing and implementing a range of policies, programmes and initiatives that will make a significant and practical difference to people's lives. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of that work.

In October 2001, I launched the national

programme for improving mental health and well-being in Scotland, which was the first public policy programme on mental health improvement and public mental health in the United Kingdom. Some £24 million of new money is being invested in a number of practical measures, including work by NHS Health Scotland, which is implementing a programme of mental health first-aid training. That programme is based on work that was undertaken in Australia and it aims to raise public awareness of mental well-being and mental health problems. The programme is being tested throughout Scotland in a range of settings, including colleges, police forces, general hospitals and local communities.

We have funded see me Scotland, the national anti-stigma campaign, since 2002 and we have committed further resources to continue the campaign's work. The campaign has achieved a level of recognition and impact that exceeds our expectations, and I pay tribute not just to the campaign team but to the alliance of five organisations that continue to work together to support the campaign.

In December 2002, I launched choose life, a 10-year suicide prevention strategy and action plan. Our goal is to reduce Scotland's suicide rate by 20 per cent by 2013. The strategy is backed up with £12 million of funding for the first phase of national and local implementation. To date, there are 32 choose life co-ordinating groups working in local authority areas to address suicide prevention as part of the local community planning process.

Linked to the suicide prevention work is the breathing space telephone advice line, which aims to help people who are at risk of suicide. The line will be extended to cover the whole of Scotland by spring 2005.

People with mental health problems can and do recover; international estimates suggest that 60 to 70 per cent of people achieve recovery. There are many things that help to promote and support recovery, and good care and treatment services are a key component. The national programme is funding the Scottish recovery network to promote a wider understanding of what helps people to recover and to support local agencies to help people to recover.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I am grateful to the minister for that information, which is useful. In March 2004, the "National Mental Health Services Assessment" indicated that in 2002 there were nearly 900 suicides or undetermined deaths in Scotland—that is a horrific figure. The review also shows that access to services in times of crisis is a high priority. If someone is facing a potential suicide situation, that is an emergency. A helpline number is obviously important, provided that it is well

known. Can the minister tell me the breathing space helpline number?

Malcolm Chisholm: I do not personally know what it is. The helpline is operating in greater Glasgow and Argyll and Clyde but, as I indicated, it will be extended to cover the whole of Scotland by spring 2005. As Bruce Crawford points out, the issue is not just a matter of helplines, important as those are, and I will move on to talk about other services, including crisis services. As I have only five and a half minutes, I will have to do so without taking interventions. I will have to be selective, but I want to give an outline of the vast range of initiatives that are under way.

I take this opportunity to focus on some key elements of the efforts that are in hand to improve mental health services. When I spoke to the Parliament last year, I committed the Executive to undertake a national assessment of mental health services throughout Scotland to help us to identify the issues that we need to address in implementing the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. That work was completed and published last month, and I am grateful to Dr Sandra Grant and her team for their excellent work. Their findings were much as we and others expected—although there is much that we can be proud of, there are significant areas for development.

Using the results of the national assessment, each area has been asked to complete a joint local implementation plan to set out how the statutory agencies, with their voluntary sector partners and working with service users and their carers, will deliver on the act's requirements. To help with the implementation of the act, additional new resources have been allocated between 2003 and 2006. Some £27 million is being provided to local authorities, and partnership agreement funding of £15 million is being invested in national health service boards to support a range of work including the development of crisis response services.

I will pick up on a number of other areas for action that are mentioned in Dr Grant's assessment. The first area is work force issues. We established the national mental health work force group, which is chaired by the head of the mental health division, and it is considering work force planning for the new act, including recruitment, retention, development and retraining issues. It uses a partnership approach and it is supporting NHS employers and partner organisations to develop local implementation plans. The group is modelling future work force requirements in the light of the act, and it is gathering baseline intelligence on the current mental health work force. In the future, the group will focus on work force redesign, training and

development issues. Specific work is in hand with the Royal College of Psychiatrists on those issues.

On the SNP amendment, redesign is important but I point out that we have created more training posts and specialist registrars for psychiatrists. There is a recruitment problem throughout the United Kingdom—indeed, it is far worse in England than in Scotland. We have increased the number of training positions for clinical psychologists, so important action is being taken.

The second aspect to highlight is service redesign. An appropriate example of that, given that we are in national depression week, is the work that is being done by the Health Department's centre for change and innovation. As I mentioned, depression is a common mental health problem in Scotland. It is costly, but it is also treatable. Access to local and timely responses and the full range of interventions and supports for depression are not yet universally available. The national doing well by people with depression project aims to address those issues. It is a three-year national programme with an initial budget of £4.5 million for 2003 to 2006.

Work is being done in a number of areas throughout Scotland to improve the way in which depression is managed. In practice, that means improving access to services and extending the range, quality and availability of treatments and interventions. The results of that work will be shared throughout Scotland to help to ensure the uptake of those new and improved ways of working to support people with depression.

A third area that we are progressing is improvement to care, treatment and support for perinatal mental illness. That work aims to provide services that are specifically targeted at the needs of mothers and their babies. The act places a particular responsibility on health boards to progress that important area of specialist care. In advance of implementation of the act, we have developed guidance for the organisation of admission services for mothers and babies. Greater Glasgow NHS Board is well advanced in that work, and I am delighted that it has invited me to open a dedicated unit later this year. Other boards are developing their plans.

I have deliberately left until last the most important element of Dr Grant's report: the experiences, views and wishes of people with mental health problems and their carers. Although a lot of good progress is being made, it is clear that we need to do more to truly involve, listen to and be influenced by the views of people who have direct experience of services. I want to see not just involvement but evidence of practical action that has been taken on their views and a sense of engagement from those who provide care, treatment and support. That is essential to

achieve the person-centred focus that I want all our services to have.

An example of that is the way in which we are responding to the views that are expressed by people about the need for crisis services. In the partnership agreement, we committed ourselves to the development of mental health services, particularly crisis services. We have provided funds in response to the "Bid 79" report by the remote and rural areas resource initiative to help systems to develop psychiatric emergency plans. I have also been particularly encouraged to learn about plans to develop a crisis service that is led by people with experience of mental health problems, and we are considering how best to support that in partnership with the Scottish Association for Mental Health. I pay tribute to the work that that body has done on psychiatric drugs, including its most recent report, which again illustrates the importance of involving users as partners in their care.

An important aspect of supporting user involvement is the development of individual and collective advocacy services, and we are committed to ensuring access to independent advocacy for those who need support. There is a duty under the act to provide that, and substantial extra funds have been allocated. Finally, we are funding a major national service user conference, which will take place on 22 and 23 June.

My time is up so let me conclude. Mental health must be a priority for the Executive and for the Parliament and it will continue to be so. I am as conscious as anyone that more must be done to improve Scotland's mental health and well-being, but I believe that we are making progress.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges, in National Depression Week, the Scottish Executive's commitment, reflected in the Partnership Agreement, to maintain the mental well-being of the people of Scotland and to improve the situation of those with mental health problems; notes that National Depression Week aims to raise awareness of the realities of depression and to reduce the stigma associated with it; commends the work of the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being and progress towards implementation of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003; welcomes specific initiatives in relation to workforce development and service re-design, such as the Doing Well by People with Depression projects, but also urges the Executive to continue to support efforts to reduce suicides through the "Choose Life" strategy, to remove stigma and to increase the range and quality of services available to those with mental health problems.

10:20

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): It is always entertaining to listen to Frank McAveety first thing in the morning, but it is slightly disappointing that his statement has abbreviated

this debate.

The SNP welcomes the chance to debate mental health one year on from the passing of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. We find it easy to welcome any initiatives that will improve the mental health of people in Scotland and we support any measures that will reduce the stigma attached to having a mental health problem, especially if those initiatives can lead to reduction in suicide among Scotland's people.

Our amendment recognises that resource constraints will severely inhibit the progress to success. At the time of the act's passage through the Scottish Parliament, we focused on the need for adequate resources to promote successful implementation. We share the minister's vision for improving mental health services in Scotland, although we do not necessarily agree about all the ways in which he seeks to do that. Sandra Grant's findings show that much needs to be done.

On a personal note, it is 40 years ago this month that I started work in a psychiatric ward during my time between school and university. For many people, mental ill health is an intensely personal experience during which sufferers experience stigma, employment difficulties and health support that is poorer than health support for almost any other segment of people who are treated by the health service.

Over the past five years, a number of MSPs past and present have suffered bouts of mental ill health. No segment of society is immune. The socially disadvantaged suffer greater ill health than average, although mental ill health shows slightly less socioeconomic bias.

We do not try to manage health provision on the basis of how many people each winter have a cold, which is a self-limiting disease. Similarly, the 70,000 or so who consult their general practitioner for depression each year are but a fraction of those who suffer from that debilitating illness. Assessing the need for mental health provision is quite significantly different from other types of assessment and we welcome the fact that the Executive is consulting on a draft code of practice and regulations under the act.

Sandra Grant's report is disturbing. The minister said that the report was much as expected, but that is pretty disappointing, given that we have one year to go until the full implementation of the act. Let me quote the words of the patients whose comments are included in the report and which are highlighted in the Scottish Association for Mental Health briefing:

"You can sit in your room alone all day and no one will come and see how you are."

Another comment was:

"cups were unwashed and stained, patients just stubbed their fags out on the floor—it was a hellish place".

Another patient commented:

"At one stage I was lying on the ground because I was so distressed and sad. All the staff did was walk over me in the corridor."

I absolutely accept that NHS staff are dedicated and that, at its best, the NHS is very good. However, those quotations show that, at its worst, the NHS is very bad. As a caring society, we must judge our performance by the worst. We must narrow the gap by raising the performance of the worst, not by lowering the performance of the best.

Dr Jean Turner (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind): The report gives an honest picture but, in fairness to NHS staff, the NHS creates mental ill health because it does not look after its staff. We have too few people doing the job. Too many people are ill treated when they have workplace grievances and end up leaving due to mental stress.

Stewart Stevenson: Jean Turner makes an important point. It would be interesting to know what the incidence of mental ill health is among NHS staff compared with the general population. Perhaps the minister can enlighten us on that.

Stigma is also an issue. More than 100,000 Scots are denied work because of their mental ill health. Fewer employers would consider taking on someone with a mental illness than would consider taking on a physically disabled person. In the wider community, 41 per cent of those who live with mental health problems have experienced harassment in Scottish communities, compared with 15 per cent of the general public. That is why initiatives such as the see me campaign are a welcome sign of the Executive's commitment to change society's attitude. The minister said that the campaign has achieved good recognition and impact, but the question is whether it has changed the experience of people who suffer from mental ill health.

I welcome progress on reduction of self-harm and suicide. Like others, I will have been touched by suicide at some point in my life. I also welcome the signs that the focus is turning to younger people, who have been neglected in the provision of health services.

The NHS boards have formidable new burdens under the act. We have perhaps not yet seen progress in supporting health boards. The act's implementation must not be half-baked. We must not see the introduction of community-based compulsory treatment orders as an excuse for inadequate levels of hospital services. Such orders are not a sticking plaster or a cheap

alternative. We need both community-based and hospital-based provision being driven by patients' wishes.

Sandra Grant's report highlights the fact that funding is not ring fenced and much has to be provided from existing money because new money has yet to be allocated.

On staffing, 9 per cent of consultant psychiatrist posts are currently vacant and some 5 per cent have been vacant for over six months. Between 400 and 500 student nurses specialise in mental health each year, but there is a chronic under-recruitment of 10 per cent.

The report's summary refers to some significant issues that Jean Turner mentioned earlier:

"There are major staff morale, attitudinal and cultural problems which, unless attended to consistently, will inhibit full implementation of the underlying principles of the new Act ...

Workforce gaps are probably the most difficult issue to address in the short-term".

There ain't a magic bullet, but we need to hear more from the minister. Solving staff shortages cannot be done quickly. Our amendment refers to the lack of psychiatrists, which is a surrogate for a broader problem. We find it possible to support the other amendments, which have merit, as does the motion.

I conclude by drawing the minister's attention to the fact that none of the Executive's 14 health objectives makes any reference to mental health. Let us hope that, after the scheduling of today's debate, we see a welcome shift up the priority ladder for this rather forgotten corner of the NHS.

I move amendment S2M-1184.1, to insert at end:

"while expressing concern that the large number of vacant consultant psychiatrists' posts represents a significant barrier to delivering much sought after improvements."

10:28

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): I welcome today's debate. I regret that it will be short, given that many members have previously expressed their desire to speak on what is a very big subject. Mental ill health probably affects 25 per cent of the Scottish population at some time in their lives. That is a stark figure. Mental health may be an Executive priority, but that is not always apparent to people—those who suffer from the conditions and those who try to care for them.

The minister has talked a good game this morning, but we need to ensure that we get action to match. I welcome the resources that he has announced, but I am concerned about their size.

Like others, I am concerned about whether we will have the trained work force that will be able to implement and use those resources in the best interests of sufferers and their families.

It is frightening that 30 per cent of employees in any one year will suffer from a mental health problem. As Stewart Stevenson rightly pointed out, that affects us in Parliament as well. Nobody is immune to mental illness. Part of the problem is to do with the way we lead our lives in our society and the pressures that people are put under.

My amendment highlights the point that Dr Turner made about retention of and support for the mental health work force. I had a family member who suffered from poor mental health. She was in a psychiatric ward in an old building that was not fit for purpose. However, more important was the fact that there were not enough trained people to man that ward fully throughout the week. If we went in on a Saturday or Sunday to visit—as we did—we found that some of the nurses had been co-opted from another part of the hospital and did not have the necessary training. That meant that trained members of staff were under tremendous pressure to juggle the needs of the various patients who might want assistance at any time. If we are to encourage people to take part in training to become psychiatric support workers such as nurses, psychiatrists and therapists—there is a huge shortage of therapists—we must ensure that they are well supported and safe in their work, because there are elements of risk in some situations.

In my amendment, I mention suicide, about which we are all concerned. No one in Scotland is unaware of the fact that suicide is the leading cause of death in men aged between 15 and 34—that point has been made in the chamber on many occasions. I welcome the minister's comments on the matter this morning. Once we are a little further down the road, I would like the minister to indicate—perhaps by placing information in the Scottish Parliament information centre—how the problem is being addressed, so that Parliament can have access to information about what is happening.

The minister and others have mentioned stigma, which is a very important issue.

Bruce Crawford: I asked the minister to provide the telephone number for the breathing space helpline. I did not expect him to know it, but I was trying to make the point that it should be a 999 service because it deals with real emergencies. Does David Davidson share my view that people should be able to access the service in that way to get help?

Mr Davidson: I support any action that will enable access to care to be provided in a hurry. I

thought that that would have been one of the tasks of NHS 24. In the absence of the direct number that the minister cannot remember, I would try NHS 24. I presume that I am helping the minister out by making that point.

I spoke recently at a function that was also attended by the head of the mental health division of the Health Department. Interestingly, people from areas other than mental health were at that function. Stigma is an issue—it is about being different but not being understood. We must take that vital subject to our hearts in Scotland. It relates not just to mental health but to disabilities in general.

I was disappointed that the minister did not say much about the voluntary sector and the wonderful role that it plays, despite its not being supported adequately. I know that the minister and his team support the establishment of a new organisation to support carers of mental health patients. I hope that in time he will be able to back that up, as I know that he has given his staff clearance to become involved, which I welcome greatly. Many carers throughout Scotland are grateful for that.

This morning there has been much talk about Sandra Grant's report, which highlights some issues in the community. There is a chronic shortage of community psychiatrists and support staff—instead of there being one psychiatrist per general practitioner practice, there may be one community psychiatrist operating in the community two days out of five and who has to cover six or eight practices. To be frank, that is not good enough; it is certainly not good enough for those involved and for sufferers.

We need to consider early assessment in all areas of mental health, not just for depression. If early assessment does not take place, we may end up dealing with chronic conditions, suicides and all sorts of habits, such as alcohol or drugs habits, which people develop as means of escape. If we assess people early, we must have the capacity and infrastructure in the health service to provide care to people once they have been assessed.

I hope that the Auditor General for Scotland is watching the outcomes of these developments. It is now his habit to examine various aspects of health care, such as infection in hospitals and cleanliness. I hope that he will start to consider mental health, so that adequate outside influence can be brought to bear on it.

I move amendment S2M-1184.2, to leave out from "acknowledges" to end and insert:

"welcomes National Depression Week and its aims to raise awareness, reduce the stigma and make more effective the treatment of depression; notes the work of the Scottish Executive to implement the Mental Health (Care

and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 but also notes the conclusions of the National Mental Health Services Assessment which highlights shortcomings in mental health services; is concerned about recruitment, retention and support issues surrounding the mental health workforce; notes that the number of those receiving care in inappropriate settings is still too high, and urges the Executive to increase its efforts to address the rising incidence of suicide in Scotland."

10:34

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP): I commend all the helpful speeches that have been made.

The figure of one in five has already been cited often in the debate. That figure could apply to the chamber, although mental health problems affect disproportionately those who live in deprived areas. I do not think that many members live in such areas, so perhaps fewer than one in five of us is affected by mental ill health.

There is a duty on the politicians in the chamber to help to remove the stigma that is associated with mental ill health by acknowledging contact with mental health problems, or experience of mental health problems that they might have had; for example, I have suffered from post-natal depression. Mental ill health is not about being different—it is quite normal to react, at some stage in our lives, to the society in which we live with a mental health problem.

Poverty is a big factor. People who live in the poorest areas are nearly three times as likely as the general population to be admitted to hospital for depression. Malcolm Chisholm said that people with mental health problems were more likely to be poor: poverty is both a cause and an effect of mental ill health. People who live in deprived areas are three times more likely to commit suicide, four times more likely to be admitted to hospital for self-poisoning, six times more likely to be admitted with schizophrenia and 10 times more likely to be admitted with an alcohol problem. We cannot address individual mental ill health without addressing the health of society in general. Unless we introduce radical measures to eradicate poverty, hopelessness and the despair that goes with them, we will not reduce seriously the number of people who are affected by mental health problems. Even within the limited powers of the Scottish Parliament, we could—for example, by abolishing prescription charges—do a great deal to reduce the economic burden on people who have been diagnosed as having mental health problems. We also need to consider prevention, which would be much more effective than treatment. We need to eradicate poverty.

One helpful measure would be to ensure that local authorities are able to offer people with mental health problems—as they do for people

with disabilities—access to concessionary travel and appropriate transport schemes. The dial-a-bus scheme that provides a taxi-style service should be extended to those who are unable to use public transport because of anxiety disorder. Small measures of that sort would make a big difference to the quality of life of people who have mental health problems.

Reference has already been made to the situation in the workplace. The figures make it clear that a higher than average proportion of people who are in employment suffer from mental ill health—three in 10 employees have a mental health problem in any one year. NHS staff have been mentioned and it is absolutely true that a very high proportion of sickness absence among NHS staff is associated with stress and mental health problems. Just before I was elected, I dealt with issues relating to staff in acute medical receiving wards, which have sickness absence rates of up to 20 per cent. The majority of those absences were caused by stress. We must care for the staff who care for the patients.

It is clear that there is a case for money to be spent on preventive measures and for mental health services to be lifted from their current Cinderella status in the NHS. At the same time, we need to remove stigma from people with long-term mental health issues. Less than 10 per cent of people with severe and enduring mental health problems are in full-time employment and 72 per cent of people with psychotic illness are unemployed or economically inactive, which is unacceptable. Discriminatory attitudes that would be unthinkable for any other oppressed group are promoted by sections of the press and, unfortunately, fear and hatred of people with mental health problems are the last acceptable prejudices. Despite the see me campaign and all the great words that have been uttered in the chamber, in the latest issue of *Holyrood* magazine, ex-MSP Mike Russell casually uses the abusive word “loony” to describe political opponents. That is not acceptable. We have all been guilty of it in the past—I admit guilt—but we need to cut it out.

My amendment refers to several measures, including the abolition of prescription charges—one of the big issues—and a proper advocacy service for when there is debate. Access to cognitive therapy and counselling should be as easy as access to a prescription. The pharmaceutical companies have too great a vested interest in the profits that are associated with drugs and mental illness and I have grave concerns about the prescription of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.

It is unacceptable that people have to wait in excess of six weeks before they receive counselling. There should be equal access to

alternative therapy and cognitive therapies that can be much more effective at achieving recovery, rather than merely stabilisation.

I also agree that we need to have emergency access. During the consultation on primary medical services in Lanarkshire NHS Board, mental health groups have consistently raised the issue of being unable to get a duty consultant psychiatrist when they approach out-of-hours services through their general practitioners or through accident and emergency units. All that is unacceptable.

Words are fine, but we have to apply resources in the long term in order to achieve real change, and we have to tackle the problems in society that cause the hopelessness and despair that lead to the majority of mental health problems.

I move amendment S2M-1184.3, to leave out from “through” to end and insert:

“; notes that mental health problems disproportionately affect those living in deprived areas and that despite the Executive’s commitment to tackling mental health problems as a priority, mental health services remain underfunded and overstretched in many parts of Scotland; believes that abolishing prescription charges would help to address the poverty trap faced by mental health service users who return to work, and further believes that more resources should be directed towards treatment and rehabilitation in community settings, that there should be a greater emphasis on children’s mental health, that in-patient treatment facilities should be housed in modern buildings, accessible to the communities that they serve, that more practical and financial support should be given to the families and other carers of those experiencing mental health problems and that, as a priority, a well-resourced, independent national advocacy service for users of mental health services should be established in Scotland.”

10:41

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I am pleased that Executive has given us the opportunity to consider the services that are provided for people in Scotland who have mental health problems.

There can be little doubt that mental health services have improved in recent years. However, there is no room for complacency. A little more than a year ago, the Parliament passed the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, which was the first major overhaul of mental health law for 40 years. It is clear that it will be some time before the effects of that legislation can be thoroughly examined, but much can be done in the meantime.

As Carolyn Leckie and Stewart Stevenson said, one of the first problems that someone who is suffering from mental ill health will encounter is the stigma that is unfortunately still associated with such conditions. The Scottish survey on public attitudes on mental health showed that half of all

respondents said that they would not want anyone to know if they developed a mental health problem. Similarly, a survey that was carried out by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship (Scotland) showed that 41 per cent of people with mental health problems had experienced harassment while living in Scottish communities, which compares with the large figure of 15 per cent among the general public. That is unacceptable and we all have a role to play in bringing about a greater understanding of such conditions. A debate such as today's will play its part, but we as a society have to acknowledge that mental ill health is widespread but can in many cases be treated effectively.

The three-year mental health action plan that was announced last September contained several welcome initiatives and, just as important, the Executive is committed to providing the resources that are necessary to implement them, with £24 million coming from the health improvement fund. One of the priority areas that were identified in the action plan was the mental health of children and young people, which has not in the past been given the attention that it deserves, so I was pleased to see that the Executive will concentrate on it.

Last year, the Scottish needs assessment programme published its "Needs Assessment Report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health". The report noted that at any one time, about 10 per cent of people aged under 19 in Scotland—125,000 young people—have mental health problems that

"are so substantial that they have difficulties with their thoughts, their feelings, their behaviour, their learning, their relationships, on a day to day basis."

Clearly that is not an ideal start to life and, although it does not necessarily follow that those who suffer from mental health problems when they are young will continue to do so when they are older, it is certainly the case that the disruption that depression or other mental illnesses can have at such a crucial stage in a person's life can have a devastating effect on their later lives. It is certainly one area that we have to get right.

The Liberal Democrats believe strongly in health promotion and the prevention of ill health. That is particularly important when we deal with young people. It is no surprise that one of the recommendations of the Scottish needs assessment programme's report on child and adolescent mental health is to adopt

"An integrated approach to promotion, prevention and care".

The report found that although those themes should be complementary, in practice they are

"often discussed as separate or even competing approaches."

The mental health action plan states that the Executive will act on a number of the SNAP report's recommendations, but it does not say on which ones. I would therefore be grateful if the minister could tell me whether that is one of the recommendations that will be vigorously pursued.

Among the other priorities that are outlined in the action plan is the need to improve mental health and well-being in employment and working life. As David Davidson said, in any one year, three out of every 10 employees will be off work with a mental health problem. Although our main concern should be with the patient, the cost to employers cannot be overlooked, with the economic impact of mental health problems in Scotland estimated at almost £8 billion. I support the measures that are contained in the action plan to promote good health at work, especially the pledge to work alongside Scotland's Health at Work—SHAW—to promote mental health and well-being at work.

We must also remember that everyone has the right to work and that working is often an important part of ensuring good mental health. We must ensure that we break the vicious circle in which many people find themselves experiencing mental health problems, being unable to find suitable employment, and then experiencing further problems because of that.

One of the areas that was highlighted in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto for the 2003 elections was a pledge to

"Support the work of community mental health nursing teams, allowing services to be delivered within local communities."

That is vital because we should be ensuring that patients are, wherever possible—and, importantly, when they want it—able to stay in their homes.

It is clear that although there is still a lot of work to do, we are progressing in the right direction. By concentrating on important areas such as young people, well-being at work and—particularly important—health promotion and the prevention of ill health, we can ensure that people are in sound mental health in the future. There should now be less stigma attached to mental health problems than was the case in the past, but it cannot be denied that stigma is still present. We have to get the message across that mental health problems can affect anyone and everyone. There is no shame in someone's admitting that they have mental health problems. Help and support are available.

10:47

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I will support the motion in the minister's name and I believe that it and the amendments serve to illustrate that there is infinite demand for finite resources, whether those resources come in the shape of funding or qualified personnel.

I applaud the efforts of Malcolm Chisholm, his colleagues and members of Parliament who have been united over the years and who have stated clearly that mental health will be a priority of Parliament, which reflects serious concern throughout Scotland. There is evidence of that commitment in legislation and regulations and in the funds that are being put in place. As I understand it, funding at the end of 2001 stood at just less than £0.5 billion.

Mental health issues have probably touched us all at one time or another. As an MSP, I have dealt with several cases, a number of which I have found to be very distressing. I have a young daughter who attends university in Fife and I know of several cases there that I have found to be profoundly distressing.

My election agent also brought the issues home to me. She was a psychologist in North Lanarkshire and had to take early retirement because of the burn-out that she experienced as a professional. Her perception was that the ratio of psychologists to patients was something like 1:60,000. There are therefore enormous issues in respect of recruitment, retention and training of staff.

I applaud the work of Dr Sandra Grant, and her report. I find it to be extremely informative; when we are implementing the new legislation, the report will inform us about the challenges that have to be faced in our own back yard. If I am allowed to do so, I will speak about the situation in Fife.

The hospital configuration in Fife is of serious concern and I want to impress on the minister that there is a real need in that area. We have been talking for five years about addressing the configuration of mental health services in Fife, so I plead that the minister and his civil servants address the matter by meeting urgently with Fife NHS Board to arrive—once and for all—at the conclusion that we must have at least one centre of excellence in Fife. That view comes through in Dr Sandra Grant's report and a number of my MSP colleagues in Fife share it. The configuration issue must be addressed.

I have visited Stratheden hospital, which for centuries now has been one of the mental health providers in our locality. However, the building is inadequate; it is enormous and it is heated throughout, although only half of it is used. Money

is dripping through the bottom of a bucket that never fills up. If we are to consider waste, we must get the situation in Stratheden sorted. One of the worst cases with which I had to deal was that of a patient who was going to be a resident in Stratheden for the foreseeable future. However, he was living in one of a number of cubicles that had no windows and in which the walls were merely dividers that were only three-quarters of the height of the room, which did not allow for patients playing radios or having private conversations.

There are no children's beds in Stratheden and six of its adolescent beds have been closed. There are no separate in-patient facilities for mothers and babies. Dr Grant's report refers to those matters. There is no 24-hour response service in Stratheden. In some parts of Fife, community mental health teams are well established, but in other parts they are under-developed. Something must be done urgently to make community-based compulsory treatment orders a viable option.

The voluntary sector plays an important part in Fife, having widened the scope of the services that are provided. However, the services for carers in Fife are patchy and not well developed. There are no advocacy projects for carers and there is a waiting list for service users who want to access advocacy services. However, Fife Council and NHS Fife have a clear commitment to developing advocacy services.

The priorities in Fife that we want the minister to address are: providing mental health awareness training for the public; changing the system and the attitudes of psychiatric and medical staff; and providing a centre of excellence in mental health as part of a wider health centre. I can suggest a place in my constituency in which to build such a centre: Lochgelly. I believe that people throughout Fife agree that it has a central location. Lochgelly is adjacent to a motorway and has good access to every part of Fife. There is masses of space there for development. I believe that Lochgelly would be an excellent place in which to have a new-build facility. I am told that ministers review their capital spending allocations in June. If any underspend is found, I plead with the minister to think carefully about whether it could be used to provide a new facility in Lochgelly. Fife also needs more access to respite care and access to alternative therapies. I spoke briefly to the minister about that last night, so I know that we are pushing at an open door. Fife also needs better access to psychology services.

I thank the minister for all his and his team's hard work. From speaking with him, I know how heavily committed he is to mental health issues. He and his colleagues are addressing the issues against a difficult background of infinite demand

and finite resources.

10:53

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): I preface my remarks by thanking the Executive for bringing the debate to the chamber today. The debate is timely in that it is being held during national depression week. In addition, the debate will help to raise awareness of depression and to fight the stigma that surrounds it.

It bears repeating that one in five people will be affected by depression at some stage in their lives. Treating depression accounts for 30 to 40 per cent of the work burden of NHS primary care services. The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be second only to heart disease as the biggest global health burden by 2020. However, three in four cases of depression are neither recognised nor treated because the stigma that is associated with mental health problems continues to prevent people from seeking and finding help.

Therefore, while any and all initiatives that the Executive takes to raise awareness and tackle stigma are to be welcomed, there are legitimate questions to be asked about whether enough is being done to promote mental well-being and to combat mental ill health, given the scale of the problems and the history of underinvestment in mental health services over many decades.

Ministers are aware of the patchy nature of service provision across the country. Dr Sandra Grant's report identifies many gaps in services and it makes for grim reading. The notion that mental health is the Cinderella service of the NHS persists—under-resourced, under-staffed and under intense pressure is the reality for professionals who work in the field. Despite the central directives and the establishment of mental health as a national clinical priority, local NHS boards still appear to be reluctant to reallocate resources in favour of mental health. The minister's earlier announcement of extra resources is welcome, but ensuring that those resources reach their intended destination and have the required impact will need careful monitoring.

In the time that I have left, I want to focus on one or two areas for priority action. The first is child and adolescent mental health, which was until recently something of an invisible issue in the policy domain. As Mike Rumbles highlighted, recent studies have indicated that 10 per cent of the five-to-15 age group—125,000 of Scotland's children—suffer from mental health problems of such severity and persistence as to have a significant impact on those children's functioning and relationships. The rate is higher among children in lone-parent households and in low-

income families. However, according to the Scottish needs assessment programme report that was published last spring, such problems often go unidentified and it is difficult to access the right support even when they are recognised.

Clearly, it would make sense to ensure that such problems are tackled when they arise, instead of allowing them to develop to the point at which they endanger a child's healthy development. Early intervention and prevention of mental ill health among children should surely be at the top of the priority list for Government action. Other studies show that it is possible to instil resilience—the capacity to cope with stress—through school-based programmes. Carefully designed and implemented preventive programmes can reduce the rate of subsequent mental health problems in high-risk populations.

I am aware that the child health support group is working on a guidance template to develop the SNAP report's recommendations, but I would appreciate an indication from the ministers today of their commitment to ensuring that implementation will be supported by sufficient resources. Dr Graham Bryce, who chairs the support group's work in that area, indicated yesterday to the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on mental health that a doubling of the budget on child and adolescent mental health services would be required to turn round the dire situation that specialist services will face within the next five to 10 years.

That may be necessary as far as treatment is concerned, but clinical services alone will not tackle the underlying problems. The range of children's services must be brought into play in the form of an intelligent network. Schools have a particularly important role to play not only in terms of referrals to specialist services, but in providing direct assistance to children. The importance of a major staff-training effort cannot be overemphasised.

We must move away from current practices in which children who are identified as having mental health or behaviour problems are all too often diagnosed by general practitioners who have little time or expertise to carry out thorough assessments. I am particularly alarmed at the growth in the use of drug therapies to modify children's behaviour or to deal with their mental health problems. That cannot be the way forward. I have run out of time, but that is an area to which I will need to return in future.

11:00

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate, and I am pleased that it is taking place in national depression week, as part of a much needed

exercise in raising awareness of the realities of depression. I also welcome the Scottish Executive's commitment to improving the mental health and well-being of the Scottish population. Mental health in Scotland has always been designated as a priority by the Parliament.

The main focus of the money given so far to build up mental health services is on crisis services. If members have any first-hand knowledge of mental health issues, they will appreciate how vital a well-resourced and efficient crisis service is, but crisis services are only part of the equation. Mental health difficulties can often be chronic and recurring, and the new ways that are being used to support and treat people with depression are also absolutely essential. Unfortunately, however, mental health is an area that most people try to ignore.

We all realise and accept that our general health will have its ups and downs, and some of us are always more than happy to give chapter and verse about our aches and pains to anyone who will listen. Although we may not want to listen, we do not assign blame, but mental health is another story. Too often, it is an untold story, as the statistics show. As we have heard, one in five of us will face mental health issues sometime in our lives, which means that every single one of us will be affected in some way. If it is not oneself, it may be one's partner, children, parents or friends and, most certainly, one's constituents.

Another aspect of mental health is the fact that all categories of people are affected by it. More women than men suffer from depression problems, but more of the men commit suicide. The importance of "Choose Life: A National Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent Suicide in Scotland" cannot be overemphasised.

A surprising number of young people suffer from mental health problems. As a teacher of many years' experience, I know that it has only lately been recognised that young people in schools often have mental health problems, which lie at the heart of their learning difficulties. How can anyone concentrate on class work when they are clinically depressed? I am not sure that teachers are best placed to do the referrals, because they must first recognise that there is a problem and they must be instructed on how to pick that up and deal with it. I welcome the introduction of services to school pupils, but I know that it is not generally accepted that we should be looking after the mental health of young people—even those as young as primary pupils.

If one has what is called a sunny disposition, it is extremely difficult to comprehend the darkness of the cloud that can settle on someone else, and it is also difficult to take in the prevalence of depression. It is now accepted, however, that

consideration of health must include consideration of mental health. The report "Towards a Healthier LGBT Scotland" contains a section that states:

"Anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicide and attempted suicide have all been linked with the combined effects of the experience of prejudice and discrimination".

Thus it becomes less surprising to read in that report about the

"Higher levels of LGB people reporting psychological distress",

especially in light of the finding that "Gay" is

"now the most commonly used term of abuse in the school playground".

That is a fact that most teachers would corroborate, but I am not confident that most teachers know how to deal with it.

Because mental health cannot be considered in isolation, as Carolyn Leckie said, the problems that accompany depression can be wide ranging and quite paralysing. Problems with unemployment, housing, debt and prescription charges for essential drugs are additional problems that we must consider more seriously. For young people, education itself, bullying and general health are the problems that can come up, so it is crucial that we work to raise the general level of services across the board. Mental ill health multiplies the ordinary pressures of life, yet there is still a tendency to ignore it.

I conclude by commending the award-winning see me anti-stigma campaign, and I ask each of us to start looking around and really seeing one another. That is what the campaign is about. I also congratulate the stigma stopwatchers, who are challenging misleading or inaccurate representations of people with mental health problems in the media. That is something that we can do here as well; we can challenge such representations in the chamber. Importantly, the stigma stopwatchers also know when the media get it right, so there is a positive side to that initiative too. We need to start talking openly about mental health and give real support and good service to all those affected. I end on a lighter note by recommending the greeting used by the fictional, but very astute, Dr Frasier Crane, and by wishing everyone "Good mental health."

11:05

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

Although Carolyn Leckie, Marlyn Glen and other members have mentioned the statistic that one in five people will be affected by depression, I seem to remember that the British Medical Association wrote to us to say that more than 30 per cent of visits to GPs involved an element of mental health, so I think that the one-in-five figure may be an

underestimate.

Too often, we concentrate on staff, on drugs and on day centres, assuming that if we throw more money at mental health all the problems will be solved. I suddenly realised that we do not actually spend much time talking about the causes of depression or recognising those causes, as other members have said. Last night, many MSPs turned up for the briefing from the National Association of Funeral Directors. I was touched to hear the speakers talking about unresolved grief, which is obviously a problem that funeral directors recognise but cannot deal with. They said that they can do their bit at the time of death and that they are aware of that enormous problem, but when they refer people to bereavement counselling—particularly to Cruse Bereavement Care in Edinburgh—those people have to wait for more than three months. Instead of always talking about drugs, psychiatrists and psychiatric hospitals, we should perhaps start to look at giving people help where it is needed, rather than telling them to wait for three months and to cope on their own. The point about early intervention has been well made.

Members of this Parliament should be proud of achieving the passing of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. The Westminster Government had been considering such legislation for some years and then shelved the Mental Health Bill, but we just got on with it. The complexity of the 2003 act and the speed of its passage through Parliament is a matter for concern, but its provisions are nonetheless to be welcomed and I am sure that ministers and MSPs in all parties will closely monitor its implementation.

I commend the work of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland. I have contacted the commission on behalf of constituents who had complaints and I believe that in any discussion of mental health we should commend the excellent work that it does. However, when the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Scotland Act 2003 was passed, the shortage of psychiatrists and mental health officers was highlighted. At that time, we were 29 psychiatrists short in Scotland and required a further 28 to implement the act. Although staffing is crucial, the considerable bed blocking in mental health is also due to the shortage of day centres, crisis care centres, supported housing and residential care. Sandra Grant's thorough report highlights those shortages.

In this Parliament, we are capable of raising concerns about postcode prescribing—we are right to raise those concerns—and I was pleased to hear the point that Adam Ingram made, but that debate often leads to the view that there is a pill

for every ill. In mental health, that is particularly the case, whether the problems are long term or short term, but drugs can never be the only answer. In fact, the side effects sometimes cause greater problems than the drugs attempt to resolve. I make no apology for once again mentioning the prescription of Ritalin to young children, which is a matter for serious concern. There are also concerns about the use of Seroxat for adults. I have worked with several constituents in the Highlands who have been trying to reduce their intake of Seroxat and I am aware of the horrendous side effects that they have suffered. I acknowledge that that is not the case for every patient, but it is the case for some.

Psychological support is also needed. Given the severe staff shortages, that area is sadly neglected. As other members have said, hospitals are not just about containment. I am always shocked when I hear about people who are on suicide watch in a psychiatric hospital but who go out at 9 o'clock in the morning and come back at 9 o'clock at night. I am also amazed that so many people are reported to the police as missing from psychiatric hospitals. Psychiatric hospitals are there to support people and should not just offer bed and breakfast. The people whom they support should be closely monitored.

Carolyn Leckie mentioned therapy, counselling, complementary medicine and so on. In Scotland, 40 per cent more prescriptions are handed out for depression than in England—that is a shocking statistic. I commend the work that Adam Ingram is doing in the cross-party group on mental health. At the group's meeting yesterday, Graham Bryce talked about suicide among young men. If we think that a helpline is the only answer to that problem, we are really missing the point. Many young men and women are depressed because they are unable to express their feelings and fears. Earlier this week I met speech therapists. I had tended to think that they could help only people who have physical impairments, but in fact they have a tremendous input into helping people to express themselves. I hope that speech therapists, as well as other professions allied to medicine, will be made available. Let us not naively think that the answer to everything is to roll out the breathing space advice line throughout Scotland.

I commend the community mental health team in Nairn for its excellent work in supporting patients safely at a local level, which consistently reduces admissions to psychiatric hospitals.

11:11

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to debate mental health, which, thanks to much of the action that the Scottish Executive has taken, is not quite the Cinderella of

the health service that it once was. I acknowledge the key role that the national programme for improving mental health and well-being will have as a driver of change. Change is desperately needed.

Let us set the situation in context. Adam Ingram was right to cite information from the World Health Organisation that suggests that mental health problems are likely to be the second greatest cause of illness—after cardiac problems—in the next decade or two. That should concern us all. I agree with Marlyn Glen, Carolyn Leckie and others that there is a causal link between poverty and disadvantage and between substance abuse and mental health problems, but we must be careful not to over-generalise. Mental illness affects as many as one in five people, as we have heard, so it clearly impacts on people in all different walks of life. There is no uniformity to mental illness; it affects people in very different ways, so we must ensure that we deliver an appropriate range of services, as locally as possible.

In the context of mental health care, small is indeed beautiful—that is different from some of the other principles that drive health service reform. I stress that point because small units are clinically advantageous, not just for the service but, more particularly, for patients. Successful treatment of mental illness, whether the illness is long or short term, depends to a large degree on the delivery of local care. I think that everyone agrees that local care that is delivered by community mental health teams and provided with appropriate support is the best option in most circumstances.

However, we should not assume that the pattern of any particular mental illness remains static. As with most other illnesses, there will be crises, when appropriate in-patient services will be needed. We need a critical level of in-patient beds throughout Scotland that can be accessed locally, rather than through a centralised system. Like others, I believe that Sandra Grant's report helpfully charts the journey that is still to be undertaken. The report identifies the need for: out-of-hours and crisis services; more support for people in the community who cope with mental health problems; easier access to local, rather than centralised, services; and much better cohesion between the agencies that are involved. Perhaps most important, the report identifies the need to involve users and carers in shaping the services that are provided.

Let me be parochial for a minute. I was privileged to visit the Christie ward in the Vale of Leven hospital, which provides 24 in-patient beds. Staff there take a holistic, personal approach to the needs of people with mental illness and the ward operates as a centre of excellence—as many people would also describe it. The relocation of

such provision, even to a site that was 15 miles down the road, would be detrimental to the needs of patients, because someone's recovery is partly aided when it takes place in their local community, where they are surrounded by familiar faces and vistas, rather than in a strange environment. Staff in smaller units can have a much more personal relationship with the people for whom they care and that continuity is important.

There is a worrying trend in relation to access to in-patient services. Beds have closed throughout Scotland. It is absolutely right that that should happen in institutions such as Woodilee hospital, which are not appropriate for the care of people with mental illness. Notwithstanding that, we must ensure that sufficient short-term beds are available. Many people regard in-patient care facilities as places of safety for people who might be particularly vulnerable during an illness, just as they are places for people who are deemed to be at risk or unsafe. Assessment beds should therefore always be available for voluntary patients. There has been a 300 per cent increase in sectioning during the past 13 years in Scotland, so the risk that voluntary patients might have to be sectioned just to obtain a bed or escorted safe transport is fast becoming a reality. We need sufficient local in-patient care that can respond to a crisis and that is flexible enough to respond to local need. I commend to the minister the model that Argyll and Clyde NHS Board provides, in which the Christie ward works alongside a developing community mental health team. That is a model that can deliver results.

Finally, I know that mental health remains a priority for the Executive. However, I also know that ministers will focus attention on the drive to improve services, because that is the key to making a difference in the experience of people with mental illness.

11:17

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands (Green)): I welcome the chance to speak in the debate from the perspective of remote and rural areas, such as parts of the Highlands and Islands, where there are particular problems in promoting mental health and in delivering services to people with mental health problems. Although there are difficulties in the delivery of health care in remote areas, it is a matter of principle that services should be based on need, rather than on where people live. However, there is often a dearth of specialist services in remote and rural areas. That must be addressed, especially given that some mental health problems, such as alcoholism and, most worrying, suicide, are more prevalent in rural areas.

I have mentioned specialist services, but of

course the majority of contacts for people with mild and moderate mental health problems are with GPs and their teams in primary care. Those teams must be adequately resourced. Where necessary, health boards should take advantage of the new GP contract to commission and enhance GP mental health services—I hope that the minister keeps a watching brief on that. We must support work force planning in primary care, for example through the expansion of the GP rural fellowship scheme.

I was glad to hear in the minister's opening speech that some of the recommendations in the Bid 79 document, "Recommendations for the safe management of acutely disturbed psychiatric patients in Scotland's remote and rural areas" have been acted on. All of us who come from rural areas are aware of distressing stories of acutely mentally ill people who have to be held in, for example, police cells, which are clearly inappropriate, because there is a lack of appropriate facilities. That is unacceptable. The report makes 10 recommendations and I would be interested to know how many of those have been or will be acted on. The report recommends that each NHS board produce a psychiatric emergency plan for its area in collaboration with appropriate agencies. It also recommends patient focus and public involvement, so that service users have an input into the drawing up of such plans. It considers staff governance and protocols on, for example, the use of sedation or restraints.

Mary Scanlon: In the document "National Mental Health Services Assessment Locality Reports", the section on Highland says, on page 82, that the priorities of service users in Caithness include

"Easier transfer to hospital—waits of 18 hours in police cells are not acceptable."

We can take it that the recommendations to which Eleanor Scott refers have not yet been implemented.

Eleanor Scott: I am sure that the member is right. I received a letter from someone in Thurso who was held in a police cell in an acutely distressed state. The police acted as well as they could, but dealing with such cases is not their job. The situation was distressing for everyone concerned, including the police. There are issues about the use of community hospitals as more appropriate facilities for dealing with such cases, although that obviously involves consideration of risk management issues. I would like the Executive to state clearly that the use of police cells as a place of safety is inappropriate.

I want to focus on recommendation 10 in the RARARI document, which has the heading, "Further Development". It states:

"A *Rural Mental Health Network* should be established on a formal basis involving all NHS Boards with responsibility for remote and rural areas. The network's functions should include collection of data on psychiatric emergencies, collaboration on the drafting of PEPs"—

psychiatric emergency plans—

"sharing good practice across the country, and audit of arrangements in remote and rural areas for psychiatric emergencies."

That recommendation is crucial and I want to hear from the minister that the Executive endorses it unequivocally. I know that rural GPs seek the establishment of such a network, which would formalise and facilitate good practice and produce the necessary resources.

The end of RARARI has left a gap in the examination of health care—not just mental health care—in remote areas. I believe that the management of mental health care in those areas is an aspect of health care that will be adversely affected by that. I have already mentioned that suicide rates are higher in remote and rural areas. We need to tackle that, but we need proper resource planning to take account of the special problems and needs of people in those areas. We must consider the implications of the lack of resources and the need for the provision of staffing and support on a network basis. I will be interested to hear from the minister how those issues are being progressed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

We move to closing speeches. We are slightly ahead of the clock at this stage, so closing speakers can have a little flexibility. In theory, Carolyn Leckie has six minutes, but she can take a bit longer.

11:22

Carolyn Leckie: Thank you. I hope that I will not need that extra time.

The debate has been highly informative. I particularly want to agree with the comments of Mary Scanlon and Jackie Baillie. My amendment refers to the need for local access to services and patient beds so that people can be treated in their communities in a small and friendly environment. I hope that my amendment attracts support.

Mary Scanlon spoke about prescribing and how matters were being viewed through the wrong end of the telescope. We should be examining the causes of mental health problems. The World Health Organisation's statistics are frightening. They paint a picture of a society from which people feel disengaged and about which they are despairing. That leads to mental ill health. Without a fundamental change in society, we will not address those appalling statistics.

I want to concentrate on some aspects of my amendment that I was unable to cover in my opening speech. Adam Ingram referred specifically to children's services. The situation is unacceptable—there needs to be urgent resourcing of children's services. Children make up a fifth of the population, but only a twentieth of the mental health service budget is spent on children's services. When he sums up, I would like the minister to identify what specific measures will be taken to address that matter. In particular, I want him to deal with services for looked-after children—which require urgent attention—as those children are most vulnerable to, and most affected by, mental health problems.

We should consider prevention as well as treatment and should put greater emphasis on it. That is where education and our schools come in. The curriculum should foster an awareness of mental health and emotional well-being in children. From a very early stage, children need to be encouraged to express their emotions and how they feel—their sadness and their despair, for example, which might result from bereavement, such as the death of their parents. Schools sometimes still put far too much emphasis on discipline and conduct in the class and repress the expression of our children's emotions, so it does not surprise me that when children in this country reach adulthood, they are highly vulnerable and susceptible to mental ill health problems.

I suspect that the roots of our high suicide rate—which applies especially to young men—are associated with that sort of culture, which our society and our schools perpetuate. We need to begin to combat low self-esteem when children are very young. We cannot avoid the fact that low self-esteem among children is disproportionately related to poverty and social problems in the homes from which the affected children come.

I concur with the concerns that have been expressed about the increase in recent years in the prescription of psychiatric medication to children. There is a dearth of research into the effects of psychotropic drugs on developing nervous systems. It is irresponsible for the Executive not to check and monitor the rapid increase in the prescription of such drugs to children. We need urgently to conduct research into the prescribing of such drugs and the circumstances of their prescription and to assess the impact on the children concerned. GPs must account for that shift in practice. When someone is under pressure and under-resourced, it is sometimes too easy for them to write a prescription. Although the development of services from which children might benefit more might be a bit more resource-consuming, such services might allow children to recover rather than to remain doped up with drugs. I would like the minister to

mention children's services in his summing up.

In his opening speech, Malcolm Chisholm talked about perinatal services. I agree that the development of a special unit by Greater Glasgow NHS Board is long overdue. When I did psychiatric training as part of my training to be a midwife, I did a short stint at the Southern general hospital, which had just lost its unit for handling mothers and babies. A new special unit in Glasgow has been a long time coming. Such units are urgently required throughout the country. When mothers and babies can stay together, it is unacceptable that they continue to be separated when the mother requires treatment. I want the Executive to provide a timescale for eliminating that practice in Scotland.

Words are fine, but resources are necessary to deliver on the strategy and on our aspirations. Given that health boards have deficits of tens of millions of pounds, I am concerned that mental health services, which have always been the Cinderella service, will continue to be constrained as health boards attempt to balance their budgets. I would appreciate a commitment to provide resources for mental health services and an assurance that they will not face further stringent measures in the future as a result of the financial strictures on health boards generally.

11:28

Mike Rumbles: I have been struck by the positive tone of this morning's debate and the constructive engagement that has taken place throughout the chamber. However, I am disappointed that there are only 17 MSPs present. I am not making a party-political point—on this occasion, my party, the Liberal Democrats, is the worst offender. It is a shame that 112 MSPs are elsewhere and are not listening to the debate in the chamber; I hope that some members are watching the TV screens.

Among many points, Malcolm Chisholm mentioned that one of the Executive's targets was to reduce suicide rates by 20 per cent by 2013, which is in nine years' time. I have nothing against targets, as they can be a good thing, but I would like Tom McCabe to explain when he sums up why a figure of 20 per cent was chosen. Was it pulled out of the ether? I would like to know the reasoning behind it.

Stewart Stevenson, among other members, focused on the stigma that is associated with mental ill health; that important theme ran throughout the debate. David Davidson focused on the shortage of trained staff, and his personal experience helped to illustrate the point.

I want to spend a little more time over the points that Carolyn Leckie made. She urged us not to

use the word “loony” to describe political opponents and said that she had used that word in the past. I, too, hold up my hand. Mary Scanlon—quite rightly—has had occasion to take me to task on the issue. I shall certainly endeavour not to use the word again. I agree that MSPs must be sensitive and careful about the way in which they use language, especially in the chamber. The point is important, particularly in relation to the subject of our debate this morning. In my role as health spokesman, on considering the issue and reading through some of the literature, it struck me that the stigma of mental ill health was a constant theme throughout the literature. It is interesting that nobody from the lobby groups mentioned that point to me. We have to do what we can across the chamber to get rid of some of the stigma.

Mary Scanlon, in an extremely good speech, talked about recognising the causes of depression. She used the term “unresolved grief”, when talking about the group that she had spent time with yesterday. Help, where and when it is needed, and early intervention are required. Drugs can never be the only answer. Mary Scanlon made a positive and helpful contribution to the debate.

Jackie Baillie said that, thankfully, mental health is not the Cinderella service of the NHS that it was at one time. That is absolutely true. The Scottish Executive is doing a huge amount to raise the issue and the profile of mental health services, as is the Parliament.

Eleanor Scott focused on the specific problems of the management of mental health care in Scotland's remote and rural areas. Politics is not only about addressing issues in the chamber; it is about making choices and allocating resources where we think that they will do the most good. Eleanor Scott's point about the special needs of remote and rural Scotland was well made.

The debate has been constructive. The motion is a good one and I have no problem in supporting it. To be honest, I think that the amendments were lodged more to convey parties' participation in the debate and not because of any real intention to change the motion. The motion should attract support from across the chamber.

11:33

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Like all members in the chamber, I welcome the debate, which comes during national depression week with its aims of raising the awareness of depression, reducing the stigma that is associated with depression and mental health in general, and making treatment more effective. It has been a well-informed debate, which has shown clearly the interest of the MSPs who are in

the chamber in the mental health well-being of the population.

Statistics show the seriousness of the situation that faces mental health services at present—one in three GP consultations involves some aspect of mental health and a quarter of the population are affected by mental illness at some stage in their lives. That means that fewer of us will go through life untouched by mental health problems in one way or another—either personally or among our family and friends.

When we learn that more young men are dying at their own hand than are killed in road traffic accidents and that suicide is the leading cause of death in Scottish men aged between 15 and 34, we know just how important it is to tackle the problem head on and to unravel the complex issues that underlie it. Mary Scanlon touched on that point.

There is no doubting the Scottish Executive's commitment to maintain the mental well-being of the Scottish people and to improve the situation of those with mental health problems. As the minister illustrated in his opening speech, many of the initiatives that are under way have that intention. I was particularly pleased to hear the minister's statement about advocacy services. As has been acknowledged in the debate, however, there is still a long way to go before the Executive's aspirations are achieved.

Undoubtedly, there are serious shortfalls that have to be addressed in the provision of early intervention, crisis and respite services. Access to a range of treatments is patchy across the country; I am thinking of access to medication, complementary therapies, counselling, psychotherapy and social support. Services are not accessible at the local level, nor are they always effective in responding to people's needs. For many patients, a shortfall in specialist help can still result in GPs prescribing antidepressants and other mood-altering drugs when counselling, specialist help and psychotherapy would have been much more effective and beneficial. Bed blocking remains a serious issue and mixed-sex wards continue to cause distress to many of the patients who have to be treated in them.

As we heard, the national mental health services assessment highlights the many shortcomings of the current service and the pressures on staff to cope with the added demands of new legislation. It also highlights the perception of the chronic underfunding of services in the face of rising needs and the demands and expectations of the public and, indeed, politicians. The assessment notes the continuous change agenda and restructuring that get in the way of the prime duty of caring for patients. Stewart Stevenson's quotations from Dr Sandra Grant's report revealed

the worst in the service. Clearly, all of us hope that such conditions will soon be history.

The increasing bureaucracy that is associated with monitoring and accountability and the perception of increasing centralisation and control from the Executive—despite the rhetoric of devolved power—all lead to low morale in the service and contribute to difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. As Jean Turner pointed out, lack of concern for staff well-being is a major factor: it hits staff morale and leads to the loss of many able and well-trained people.

Dr Grant's report contained a clear recommendation that more authority, responsibility and accountability—including for budgets—should be devolved to front-line staff in the future, with the objective of enabling those staff to work closely with the voluntary sector, service users and carers. I hope that the minister will support that recommendation and that he will not be put off by the fact that it is in line with Conservative party policy.

I am pleased that Mike Rumbles and Adam Ingram highlighted the need for more work to be done with children who have mental health difficulties. I, too, heard and was impressed by Dr Bryce's excellent presentation at the cross-party group meeting yesterday. Dr Bryce gave us the frightening statistic, which Mike Rumbles and Adam Ingram quoted, that 10 per cent of the population aged between five and 15 years of age have serious mental health problems at any one time. That is 125,000 children—enough, as Dr Bryce said, to fill a football stadium.

The breakdown in health of many of those children can be foreseen by teachers, primary care and social work professionals who form the network of people who know about the underlying risk factors that hit those children. I am thinking of issues such as family breakdown, which is increasingly common, and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances. The network, however, is not really in the loop as far as early diagnosis is concerned.

The children who were questioned by Dr Bryce's organisation cited the need for discussion about issues such as family breakdown. They want to have it out with adults; they want to know how family breakdowns come about and they want to talk about the emotional consequences. They also cited the need for adults to learn how to communicate with young people; how not to talk down to them; and how to find language with which young people are in tune. The children pointed out the lack of leisure and recreational facilities in many communities. They showed concern that, although many schools pay lip service to issues such as bullying by having policies on paper, they do nothing very much to

deal with the issues.

Work is under way to develop the NHS work force and the network of children's services. That includes several of the initiatives to which the minister referred in his opening speech, such as the see me anti-stigma campaign, the health-promoting schools unit that deals with emotional health and well-being and the choose life suicide prevention strategy. All those measures aim to move services closer to children, at home and at school. For those who are already ill, the mental health and well-being support group is looking at services for the seriously unwell and those who come under the provisions of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003.

There are, however, major problems facing child and adolescent mental health services. There are serious shortages in all the professions, and there is difficulty in providing an integrated system for young people that involves health, education and social work services. The separate structures and budgets of those authorities make joint planning and joint service provision hard to achieve. I urge the minister to give serious consideration to unifying the health-related social budgets so as to help alleviate that problem.

I reinforce what David Davidson said about voluntary services and urge more use of the voluntary sector. It has the skills and expertise that are required, as well as flexibility and willingness to work with the private sector. Voluntary organisations know that they could do more and they feel frustrated that they are often left out of the equation, despite the fact that they are able and willing to help.

Mental health is a massive issue. Progress is being made on several fronts, but there is still a very long way to go before people who are suffering from mental illness get the care that they require. Money is tight and morale is low, and there is undoubtedly a serious lack of trained professionals in health and social work. That must be addressed. There has been progress, but much more is needed. That is why I am happy to support the amendment in the name of my colleague David Davidson.

11:41

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Like other members, I welcome the opportunity to debate this important issue. The timing of the debate is appropriate, as it comes one year after the passing of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and one year before that act is fully implemented. The debate gives us an opportunity to assess what has happened and what we can do to make improvements before 2005.

I used to volunteer for mental health services, and I seem to remember doing a lot of outreach work, particularly in housing schemes. Unfortunately, a lot of that work has been discontinued but, having read Sandra Grant's report, I see that things have moved more towards community work, which should be commended. I look forward to the day when we go back to having more community health services, which were useful. I will return to the subject of community work, which was raised by Carolyn Leckie, Jackie Baillie and others.

One of the issues in Sandra Grant's report that was raised most frequently by service users and carers was the services that they wanted to be either improved or continued. In particular, they wanted the see me campaign to be continued, and I thank the minister for his announcement on that. That campaign has been very successful and I know that users and carers will welcome the announcement. Service users and carers mentioned responsible and positive reporting by the media, and I will return to that subject, too. They also wanted openness on the part of mental health services about what services are available and what information they can access; in particular, they wanted such information to be made available for carers, and not just for users.

Stewart Stevenson raised the paramount issue of the work force. Sandra Grant's report mentions that the position is likely to deteriorate further in Scotland. We need to take that into consideration, bearing in mind the level of training that is required. As we all know, there will not be any early change for the better; it was worrying to read that in Dr Grant's report. The report is honest, as members have said, and we should take cognisance of what it says.

David Davidson and Mike Rumbles mentioned the important issue of stigma, which has been raised again and again. I, too, would like to quote some figures from the survey that Mike Rumbles cited earlier. According to the survey, 64 per cent of young people said that they would be too embarrassed to disclose a mental illness or health problem to a prospective employer. I find that quite worrying. Only 37 per cent of employers said that they would be prepared to take on somebody who had said that they had a mental illness. I find that very worrying, too.

According to the same survey, 50 per cent of people said that media portrayal of mental health problems was much more negative than positive. That is why I ask the minister whether he could monitor the see me campaign. Once the campaign has run its course, perhaps another survey could be done to find out the extent to which it has improved society's perception and, I hope, that of the media. If 50 per cent of people say that the

media's portrayal of mental health problems is negative, that is a terrible indictment of the society in which we live today. I worry about that very much.

Carolyn Leckie highlighted the plight of people who live in deprived areas and the accessibility of services; the accessibility of services was also highlighted by Jackie Baillie and Mary Scanlon. Services must be accessible in the community, and I agree that we must ensure that people are not denied services simply because they cannot afford them or because they are not provided locally. That is a major issue, which Carolyn Leckie described very well.

We need to consider advocacy. I welcome the minister's recognition of the fact that demand for advocacy services will rise and I hope that he will ensure that advocacy is available to all, and not just to people who can access it and who can afford to do so. That is where the community aspect of the matter has to come in.

Many members, including Nanette Milne in her summing-up speech, mentioned children. It is very worrying to think that there are 125,000 children with mental health problems. Nanette Milne was right to say that early intervention is important if we are to help those vulnerable kids. If we could prevent something in society from getting worse, we would all be proud of that. We must pay special attention to the fact that such vast numbers of children are suffering. I am sure that all of us will be thinking about that carefully.

The minister mentioned the fact that the Executive is looking to more outreach work being undertaken. As I said, I used to do outreach work in the voluntary sector. Whole families used to come along, even if only one person in that family was suffering from some form of mental health problem, and I found that to be a good thing. Services were provided in centres—or clinics, as they were called in those days—that were located in the middle of communities, so families could bring their children, and mothers and fathers could come with the rest of the family. Perhaps because people were able to come along to meetings, there was less stigma. Neighbours and others got to know about the service, and I was amazed at the number of people who came along. I hope that we can get back to having more localised services like that. We must try to reach out and help the people concerned. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 was a good piece of work but, as Sandra Grant's report said, we must consider improving certain of its provisions.

Once again, I welcome this opportunity to debate the issue. We have heard about a number of issues around the lack of surgeons, psychiatric consultants, community services, advocacy and, obviously, funding, which I would like the minister

to address when he sums up. Although there is funding for local health boards and local authorities, Sandra Grant's report found, as have people on the ground, that the money that is allocated for mental health services is not always used for that purpose; basically, the money is soaked into the general grant. Adam Ingram picked up on that point. Is there any way that the minister could ensure that that money is spent on mental health issues? There is an issue of ring fencing, which the minister might wish to address when he sums up.

We have to know where the money is being spent. It is all right to say that money is being given to local authorities and health boards to spend on mental health services, but if—as Sandra Grant's report, users and carers are indicating—the money is not being spent on those services and is being soaked up for something else, we require answers.

We must move forward. I appreciate the fact that we are doing something that Westminster might never have got round to doing. The Scottish Parliament should be proud of that. Let us get things moving. We recognise the problems. Let us solve them and give people with mental health issues a better deal and a higher quality of service.

11:49

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe): I thank members for their constructive contributions to the debate. Yet again, a good debate has shown the commitment throughout the chamber to addressing mental health issues. I will do my best to respond to some of the points that have been made.

I say to Stewart Stevenson that mental health is one of our three national clinical priorities. Although people are quite right always to advocate additional resources for any aspect of health, it is important to put the matter in perspective. Around 10 per cent of all health spending is now directed towards mental health, which is by any standards a considerable amount of money.

I say to Adam Ingram and Sandra White, who raised concerns about monitoring the implementation of spend, that we intend to monitor the way in which the moneys that have been made available to local authorities and health boards are implemented. That is important. We are only too well aware that money can easily be diverted to other causes, so we intend to monitor the spend as vigorously as we can.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the minister take an intervention?

Mr McCabe: Not at the moment. I have just started.

I emphasise the impact of mental health problems, which we have heard are both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion and can lead to a lack of opportunity for work, training, education and participation in social and community life. One in four people will be affected directly by a mental health problem at some time in their life. Such problems can affect any one of us, regardless of our economic or social circumstances, but, as many members have said, we know that people living in deprived communities are more at risk of mental health problems and are more likely to experience negative effects on their lives.

The Executive is working with partners to reduce the social exclusion and inequalities that many people with mental health problems face. For example, we are focusing attention on opportunities for employment. I will say more on that in a moment, but I want to stress that anyone can encounter mental health problems, no matter their social standing, profession or qualifications—it can happen to anyone. We cannot say often enough that there is no shame, that stigma comes from a lack of understanding and that there is no place for and no sense to discrimination.

Stewart Stevenson mentioned the benefits of work. A key route to recovery is through the work of Jobcentre Plus, with which we are working to consider ways to improve its staff's training on and awareness of mental health. We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions on welfare-to-work and benefits issues and, in particular, on supporting pilot schemes that are designed to support people back to work and ease the transition from benefits to work.

A national pilot that is taking place in Argyll and Clyde works to support back to work people who are currently on incapacity benefit. The success of such schemes is vital, because in some areas of Scotland up to 35 per cent of people on incapacity benefit have mental health problems. There are also a number of supported employment schemes throughout Scotland. In tandem with those schemes, there are a large number of local projects and services that work with people to support them in getting ready for work; they help to rebuild confidence and self-esteem and give people hope for the future. I had the opportunity earlier this week to visit the Redhall walled garden in Edinburgh, which is an excellent example of the contribution that our voluntary sector partners can make to improving participation and inclusion for those with mental health problems.

For people who are already in work, we are working closely with Scotland's health at work, which has developed an employment and mental

health training programme for employers to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities on employment and mental health. The programme is being rolled out throughout the country and each area will have access to a trained instructor.

We need to continue to seek ways to reach out to those who are vulnerable to poor mental health and who may feel particularly excluded. We are working on a range of vulnerable groups of that kind. In particular, with the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health, we have an initial two-year programme of awareness raising and development work and a series of information and good-practice seminars are taking place throughout Scotland in the next eight months. The centre is also being funded to take stock in each local area and to examine in depth the provision of services and support for the mental health of people from ethnic minority communities. The results will help in the planning of appropriate services and access to them.

As has been said during the debate, we know that the cost of inequality can be high. People who live in the most deprived communities of Scotland have a 10 times higher risk of suicide than do those who live in the least deprived communities. The figure for suicide in Scotland is 800 a year, with 600 deaths being attributed directly to suicide and the remaining 200 deaths being unattributed. In the Executive's choose life strategy, we are working to address those inequalities and we are about to introduce a community based training course. Over two weeks—one week in West Lothian and one week in Glasgow—48 instructors from throughout Scotland will be trained in applied suicide intervention skills. The course is run by experts in suicide prevention from Living Works Education, Inc at the University of Calgary in Canada and has been developed over 20 years. It has proved successful in helping agencies, community representatives, family members and others to assist in the prevention of suicide.

Mike Rumbles mentioned the target to reduce by 20 per cent the incidence of suicide by 2013. That target, which is consistent throughout the United Kingdom, reflects our determination to focus on this critical area, but also to be realistic.

I turn to the challenges that we face in providing services to those who experience mental health problems. Mike Rumbles pointed out rightly that one in 10 of our children and young people under the age of 19—125,000 of our young people in Scotland—will have mental health problems that are so substantial that they have difficulties with their thoughts, feelings and behaviour day to day.

Mary Scanlon: Will the minister join me in commending Lochyside RC Primary School in Fort William, which the First Minister, Jim Mather and I visited separately on Monday, for its excellent

relationship with the pupils whereby the staff listen to and build partnership with the pupils and encourage them to express their feelings through art projects?

Mr McCabe: Of course I warmly welcome such developments. I hope that the pupils were not diverted too much from their studies and thoughts by all the people who visited them earlier in the week. I am sure that the visits made a contribution and did not detract from their work.

I am happy to reassure Mike Rumbles and Adam Ingram that the Executive is proceeding with several strands of work following the publication last May of the Scottish needs assessment programme report on the needs of children and young people with mental health problems. The work will cover promotion, prevention and care and will involve a range of agencies including those in education, social work, health and the voluntary sector.

We are aware that there are particular concerns about the provision of in-patient services for children and young people and the child health support group is considering the range of in-patient services that are now needed throughout Scotland. I note the concerns that Mary Scanlon and Carolyn Leckie expressed about Ritalin. Its prescribing is subject to a Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network guideline, but it will be reviewed in due course.

There are important issues to address in relation to the arrangements for planning, resourcing and delivering mental health services. We are conscious of the opportunities and challenges that community health partnerships will present for the delivery of properly integrated local mental health services. Officials have therefore been working with partners from health boards, local authorities and voluntary organisations to develop guidance, which I expect to be available soon in draft for discussion with the wider mental health community.

I believe that the Executive has in place a clear policy on mental health. We want to see an overall improvement in the mental well-being of the people of Scotland, towards which the national programme is making real progress. We also want to see a real improvement in the services that are provided to those with mental health problems. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 is an important part of that and the follow-up to Dr Grant's review will be critical, not just to ensure that the act is implemented but to improve the range and quality of services for all the people in Scotland who need them.

I reaffirm the Executive's commitment on mental health, which is to reduce the risk and prevalence

of suicide and the stigma associated with mental health problems, including depression; to promote and support recovery in all senses; and to improve services overall for those with mental health problems. It is clear from this morning's debate that the Parliament shares that commitment and those aspirations and we look forward to working together to make a difference in mental health awareness and services for all people in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I have two brief announcements. First, members will wish to join me in welcoming to the public gallery His Excellency Mr Masaki Orita, the Japanese Ambassador. *[Applause.]* Secondly, after First Minister's question time, I will make a brief statement on Holyrood.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Prime Minister (Meetings)

1. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):

To ask the First Minister when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister and what issues he intends to raise. (S2F-806)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans to meet the Prime Minister.

Mr Swinney: On 21 January 2002, the Deputy First Minister—the then Minister for Justice—announced plans to privatise the escorting of prisoners. He said:

“Public safety will not be compromised under any circumstances”.

Does the First Minister accept that awarding the contract to a company that, according to the current Minister for Justice, did not have enough staff, training or management controls was a breach of Jim Wallace's promise? Why was that contract awarded in those circumstances?

The First Minister: No, I do not accept that the assurances that were given by ministers have been put to one side in this instance. The Government has a clear policy to ensure that the 300 police officers who can go back out on operational duty are delivered in our police service and that those police officers are doing the job that they are signed up to do, which they chose as a career path, and are not transporting or supervising in waiting rooms prisoners who can be transported or supervised by others.

At no time in advance of the contract, during the negotiations for the contract or since has there been any suggestion that the police force in Scotland would be anything other than in charge of the maintenance of order in our courtrooms. The Minister for Justice made that perfectly clear yesterday afternoon.

At all times, the Executive is absolutely committed to ensuring that, in Scotland, we reduce crime, tackle crime, prevent crime and catch criminals. We are committed to ensuring that the police officers of Scotland can do their job and do the job that they want to do.

Mr Swinney: I have here a statement from Jim Wallace, from January 2002, in which he says beyond any question, in the context of escorting prisoners to be contracted out:

“Public safety will not be compromised under any circumstances”.

The Minister for Justice conceded to Parliament

yesterday that public safety had been jeopardised by the escape of James McCormick. She said:

"Reliance had been working on its implementation plan for some time before contract signature ... It is now abundantly clear that Reliance seriously underestimated the challenge that it would face".—[*Official Report*, 21 April 2004; c 7528.]

For 14 months the implementation plan was being worked on and it all went horribly wrong on implementation. If it is abundantly clear to ministers that Reliance is not up to the contract after a convicted murderer has escaped, why did ministers not make it their business to be abundantly satisfied that Reliance was up to the job when the contract was signed in the first place? Why did ministers not make it their business to determine whether Reliance could handle the contract? Why did the Government award a contract that has failed to deliver public safety?

The First Minister: The contract will not fail. Reliance will—as it properly should—be forced to deliver on that contract. That is the proper job of the Minister for Justice and those who are responsible for the service.

I remind Mr Swinney that a policy issue is at stake. What has happened in the past three weeks is not an argument against reform; it is not an argument to take police officers off the beat and put them back in the vans looking after the prisoners. It is an argument for more reform, not less. It is an argument for ensuring that our courts are properly run. It is an argument for ensuring that, when prisoners go to one court in the morning, they do not go back to the prison and then on to a different court in the same city in the afternoon. It is an argument for ensuring that the right reforms are in place throughout our court and prison services. If we ensure that that happens, we will release not only up to 300 police officers as a result of this contract, but many more police officers for operational duty to serve the public. That is where they belong and that is where they want to be.

Mr Swinney: I do not know whether the First Minister has noticed, but many police officers in Scotland today are chasing a convicted murderer who has escaped because of the reforms. That is not putting more police on the beat; it is putting police out to pursue murderers who should properly be in the jails of Scotland.

The point that I am trying to get the First Minister to accept is that, when the Government agreed to the contract, it promised the public that public safety would be guaranteed. Whichever way we look at the matter, public safety has been jeopardised, because a convicted murderer is currently free in our society today. I am asking the First Minister to explain to Parliament why he

signed up to a contract that has jeopardised public safety when his ministers promised that they would do no such thing.

The First Minister: Public safety has been jeopardised in the case of that individual not by the contract, but by the implementation of the contract. That is why the company will rightly face penalties for not implementing the contract properly. That is exactly the right procedure.

I notice that Mr Swinney's former chief executive said this week that the Scottish National Party is all over the place because it only ever complains about things and does not come up with solutions. What we need in Scotland today are solutions that not only reform our court and prison services, but get our police officers and our police service doing the job that they want to do. We need every one of those 300 police officers on operational duty. We must ensure that they can get out there, do the job that they want to do and catch not only this one criminal, but many more criminals. More reform—not less—is what is needed in our prison service. The SNP will have to wake up to that some day.

Cabinet (Meetings)

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-813)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The next meeting of Cabinet will, as ever, discuss our progress towards implementing the partnership agreement to build a better Scotland.

David McLetchie: I thank the First Minister for that answer, but I am sure that the Cabinet will want to discuss further the implications of the Minister for Justice's statement to Parliament yesterday and the fact that a brutal killer is still on the loose in Scotland.

The Reliance fiasco is bad enough, but it is compounded by the fact that the Executive releases hundreds of prisoners early on licence who go on to commit further crimes. This week, we heard of a brutal attack on a nurse, Pauline Dunnery, at her place of work in Perth royal infirmary by an assailant who had been released early and was out on licence. Figures released by the Executive show that the number of prisoners recalled from licence reached a new high of 239 in 2002. Does the First Minister accept that his publicly expressed confidence in his Minister for Justice is no longer matched by public confidence in the justice system?

The First Minister: One of the reasons why I have so much faith in the Minister for Justice is that it was she who set up the Sentencing Commission, which will deal with the very problem that Mr McLetchie outlines. There is a clear need

to deal with the issue of early release on licence and there is a clear need to consider what happens when potential prisoners are out on bail when sometimes they perhaps should not be. We established the Sentencing Commission to consider those issues properly with the judiciary and with those in the system whom I believe we must have on side to make the policy work.

We must ensure that the system works for victims and for witnesses and does not work for the prisoners or the criminals. That is the absolute priority for this Government and that is why we are moving forward so quickly and effectively in tackling the issues that Mr McLetchie regularly raises. We share the same interest in the issues, but our job is to find solutions, which is what we will do.

David McLetchie: The First Minister talks about tackling issues quickly, but the establishment of the Sentencing Commission is a recipe for delay and inaction on the part of the Executive and the Parliament in dealing with the scandal of early release. As the First Minister is well aware, I have said in the Parliament on numerous occasions that one simple way of restoring confidence in the justice system in Scotland would be to end the scandal of early release and to give women such as Pauline Dunnery the protection that they deserve. Pauline Dunnery was a victim of a crime that would never have happened had her attacker still been in prison serving the sentence that was handed down to him in court. That is the fact of the matter. Will the First Minister tell us when his Sentencing Commission will report, when some action will be taken and when the Minister for Justice will take steps to restore a reputation that has been so badly battered this week?

The First Minister: We have made clear in the past the timetable to which the Sentencing Commission is operating. The important thing is to ensure that we have a system that works in practice for witnesses and victims in Scotland's courts. It is fundamental to the operation of that system that we do not just, through knee-jerk reactions in the chamber, adjust laws in relation to sentencing. In the tradition of the Scottish system, we should ensure that the changes are applicable in practice. That is why we gave a commitment this time last year to establish the Sentencing Commission and why we ensured that within six months of the election the Sentencing Commission was up and running. That is why the Sentencing Commission has been given clear priorities for decisions and action, including dealing with the issues of people who are released on bail and people who are released early on licence. That is why when we get the recommendations—if they are tough enough—we will implement them and do it quickly.

Local Taxation

3. Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Executive's response will be to the march to be held in Glasgow on 24 April 2004 in support of the abolition of the council tax in favour of an income-based alternative. (S2F-831)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): We live in a democracy where, I am happy to say, people are free to march to express their views. I hope that all those who are on Mr Sheridan's march on Saturday are fully aware of what they would pay under any Government that he ever led.

Tommy Sheridan: A number of nursery nurses will be on the demonstration on Saturday. Given that they have had to strike against their pathetically low pay, I can give them an absolutely cast-iron assurance that they will pay less under any Government led by me or any other Scottish Socialist Party representative. Does the First Minister think it fair that a nursery nurse or a pensioner on a low income in Scotland is paying a higher proportion of their income on council tax than he is, when he is on a very good income of £123,000? Is it fair that he pays a lower proportion than them, despite the large difference in income?

The First Minister: I find it astonishing that Tommy Sheridan wants to confirm in the chamber today that he assumes that, under any Government in Scotland run by the Scottish Socialist Party, nursery nurses would always be low paid. My ambition is that Scotland's nursery nurses will be better paid and have better status. That is why we have given them a firm commitment that, if the current dispute is resolved quickly, we will establish a national review of their position.

We also need to remember that—I hope that Mr Sheridan will point this out with his usual eloquence in his speech on Saturday—80 per cent of the cost of local government services in Scotland is paid through the national taxation system. All of us who are working contribute to that on the basis of our income. That is why the combination of central and local taxation is a good one. I am totally opposed to Tommy Sheridan's proposal that all local government taxation in Scotland should be centralised—collected by, organised by and paid to national Government—without any aspect of local democracy. That is fundamentally contrary to the socialist principles to which many of us adhere and I am surprised that it is in line with his.

Tommy Sheridan: In a friendly manner, I suggest that the First Minister might want to go to the doctor to get his ears tested. I gave a cast-iron assurance that nursery nurses would pay less under a Scottish Socialist Party Government; I did

not say that they would continue to be scandalously low paid, as they have been for the past seven years under the Labour Government at Westminster and the Government in Scotland.

The First Minister wants to avoid the question. Is it fair that MSPs on £50,000 a year, ministers in the Cabinet on £80,000 a year and the First Minister on £123,000 a year pay less as a proportion of their income than low-paid nursery nurses and pensioners pay? Is it not about time that the First Minister stopped protecting and pampering the well paid and the wealthy and started to protect pensioners and the low paid in Scotland? The people who will march on Saturday in Glasgow will call for the axing of the council tax and its replacement with an income-based alternative so that people such as the First Minister and I pay more whereas pensioners and low-paid workers pay less. Does the First Minister agree with that call?

The First Minister: I have said to Mr Sheridan before that there is a case for property-based taxation in our society, although that is not necessarily a universal view in the partnership parties. Such a tax is easy to collect and is on one element of an individual's wealth and status in society. It is right that such a tax should be applied locally. I believe strongly that all of us should make a contribution to the cost of local services, which we do through income tax and other taxes that we pay nationally. In Scotland, nationally collected taxation contributes 80 per cent of funding for local services. The system is economically justifiable, although it needs to be reviewed, which will happen through the independent review of local government finance.

Draft European Constitution

4. Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the First Minister how the responsibilities of the devolved regions and nations are reflected in the draft European constitution. (S2F-827)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The draft European constitution improves the position of nations and regions at European level. It recognises our role as legislators and sits alongside improvements in consultation on, and assessment of, European decisions.

Maureen Macmillan: Does the First Minister agree that our membership of the European Union has brought incalculable benefits to Scotland, particularly to the Highlands and Islands, which I represent? Does he agree that one great benefit that the EU brings to Scotland is the close co-operation between member states in tackling crime and justice issues and that that aspect of our membership should be better appreciated?

The First Minister: I believe strongly that there is a case for Europe-wide decision making not just on matters of environmental and economic importance, but, at times, to ensure that we tackle international crime and terrorism effectively. The new European constitution will help us to achieve that. I look forward to the debate on the constitution in relation to any referendum that might take place. The debate will be between those of us who believe in a progressive Europe that secures peace and delivers jobs for Scotland and those in the very strange alliance that may campaign in the no camp.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Has the First Minister made representations to the Prime Minister to ensure that the Scottish result in the referendum on the EU constitution will be counted and announced separately? Once the constitution has been finalised by the heads of Government, will the First Minister consider undertaking a fundamental assessment of its impact on the economic and social life of Scotland?

The First Minister: The first part of Mr Neil's question is a matter for the Prime Minister. On the second part of his question, which raises an issue on which we have had exchanges in the past, we regularly assess the impact of such matters on Scotland's economy.

I would be interested in having an exchange at some point about where Mr Neil stands on the proposed referendum. He has a history of being progressive on some of these matters, in comparison with some of his colleagues, and I would be interested to know whether he will be standing with those of us who believe in a peaceful and prosperous Europe or with the Tories, the Trotskyists and, perhaps, some of the other nationalists in the no campaign in the referendum.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Given the First Minister's response to Maureen Macmillan, will he explain to me what elements of this Parliament's devolved responsibilities are protected from EU interference at Commission level by article 17 under title III of the constitution?

The First Minister: It is interesting that a number of members of the Opposition are prepared to come out and campaign against the EU constitution because the constitution will develop the rights and the responsibilities of this Parliament and other devolved Administrations.

The key provision in the new constitution, which I hope survives the negotiations that are taking place over the next three months under the Irish presidency, is that which embeds subsidiarity at its heart. That will give this Parliament and other devolved Parliaments and Governments across Europe protection for their responsibilities at the

European level that they have never had before. That is an important step forward. If Mr Gallie is going to be on the opposite side of the argument during the next two years, I relish the opportunity to enter into debate with him.

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP): Will the First Minister outline what he believes are the red-line issues for Scotland, given the on-going negotiations over the draft constitution, especially as there are major concerns in Scotland about the references to fishing and energy? Does he agree with many in the chamber that the referendum strengthens Scotland's hand because Tony Blair will require the support of Scotland to get a yes vote?

The First Minister: The Scottish National Party and others have been guilty of gross misrepresentation of the constitution's position on both fishing and energy. Exactly as the Prime Minister said on Tuesday that he relished the opportunity that the referendum campaign offers to expose the myths and misrepresentations of the Tories, I am willing to take on those arguments in Scotland.

On fishing, the new EU constitution does not change the current provisions at all. At long last, fishing is starting to be decentralised and regional management in the North sea and elsewhere is possible. We should welcome those changes. On energy, the British Government and the Scottish Executive have made it clear that we do not accept the provisions in the draft constitution that was put together by the European convention. However, those provisions have not been represented truly. I am in close contact with the energy industry in Scotland and with the UK Government to ensure that the Executive gives them every support in getting the provisions changed.

Prison Escort Services

5. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what penalties will be paid by Reliance Secure Task Management Ltd in respect of any breach of its contract to escort prisoners. (S2F-807)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The contract provides for penalties for failure to meet agreed performance standards. The Scottish Prison Service will calculate penalties on a monthly basis following the investigation of all alleged incidents.

Nicola Sturgeon: Does the First Minister accept that, whatever additional penalties Reliance might have to pay in relation to the delays and general incompetence that it has been responsible for during the past two weeks, the public want and have a right to know the specific price that the

company will pay for allowing a convicted murderer to saunter out of a courtroom and disappear into thin air? Will he tell the Parliament today the value of the fine that Reliance will have to pay for letting James McCormick go? If he will not do so, will he outline what possible reason there can be for keeping such information under wraps?

The First Minister: The Minister for Justice made it clear yesterday that, subject to important provisions in relation to public safety and some provisions that are inevitable in relation to commercial confidentiality, we will publish the contract. We will also publish performance information that will not only allow the Parliament to criticise, rightly, the way in which the contract has been implemented in the past three weeks, but ensure that we can guarantee that performance is improving and monitor that against the contract. That information will be agreed between the Scottish Prison Service and Reliance during the coming weeks. It will be published and it will give the Government and the Parliament an indication of whether performance is improving before we get to the stage of extending Reliance's responsibilities elsewhere in Scotland.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): It is common knowledge that the negotiation and placing of the contract were accompanied by ministerial detachment. In so far as the Minister for Justice has alluded to the contract, she has sought to hide behind issues of commercial and operational sensitivity. I listened to the First Minister's response, but does he accept that, if public confidence is to be restored not just in our justice system but in the political process in Scotland, ministerial disclosure to the Parliament of how the penalty provisions of the contract operate is critical? Does he accept that it is not enough for the contract to be published and that it is essential that we have manifest ministerial acceptance of responsibility and appropriate and regular statements in the chamber about how the penalty provisions are applied?

The First Minister: I do not think that Annabel Goldie can say that responsibility has been shirked in any way. The first thing that happened when the Parliament returned to a full plenary meeting yesterday was that the Minister for Justice gave a parliamentary statement accepting her responsibility for sorting out the situation. During the past three weeks, the minister has been pursuing not just the Scottish Prison Service, the Scottish Court Service and the police service, but Reliance, to ensure that this debacle is sorted out. That is exactly the right thing for her to do and that is why she is in her position. She is the kind of person who takes such tough decisions and is prepared to knock heads together to ensure that the service works in the interests of victims and

witnesses. She is not the kind of person who sits on the Tory or nationalist benches, shirks reform and is not prepared to put victims and witnesses first in the system.

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): No doubt the contract includes details of vetting and licensing. Guards who escort prisoners in England and Wales face the tough licensing and vetting procedures of the Security Industry Authority, which was set up under legislation that was passed in 2001. The Executive has stated its intention to extend that protection to Scotland. Will the First Minister confirm whether the Executive is still seeking a legislative slot at Westminster to do just that?

The First Minister: That is one of the issues that the Minister for Justice dealt with yesterday. She said quite clearly—I hope that everyone in the chamber heard her comment and I hope that some members of the media heard it, too, because unfortunately the position has been misrepresented to the public—that the people who work for Reliance in the service have been subject to additional security checks under the supervision of the Scottish Prison Service, which makes sure that those checks are in place. That is a reassurance for members of the public. Although Reliance has been unable to operate the contract successfully during the past three weeks, the individuals who are involved have had the appropriate checks, which have been applied under the supervision of the Scottish Prison Service. That is part of the agreement. We wanted to make sure that those who are involved in the service are able, properly trained and—

My apologies, Presiding Officer, I started waffling there. I will drop it at that.

Seals

6. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Executive's position is in respect of whether a cull in seal numbers is necessary. (S2F-825)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Our independent scientific advice suggests that a general seal cull is not an appropriate or effective way in which to protect fisheries. We therefore have no plans to authorise a seal cull in Scottish waters.

Mike Pringle: Many people throughout Scotland are concerned about an unnecessary cull of seals. Will the First Minister confirm that, before any change is made to current policy, the Executive will undertake a rigorous scientific analysis of the situation and consider the potential damage to Scotland's image abroad and the knock-on impact on tourism and other related businesses?

The First Minister: I can confirm that we would

consider the suggestion only if it was backed up by a considerable amount of reliable scientific evidence that such a cull was necessary and appropriate. No evidence would justify such a change at the moment, which is why we have no plans for a seal cull in Scotland.

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that culls such as the Government-sponsored ones of hedgehogs, mink and deer have a role in nature conservation? Does he also agree that we must be vigilant about what is happening in the waters around our islands by constantly assessing the impact that fishermen and seals have on the viability of all fisheries?

The First Minister: Of course it is appropriate for us to monitor those situations, but our position on the seal cull is quite clear. We are also aware that, apart from the fishing industry and the fishing communities, the greatest impact on fish stocks comes from other species in that habitat, which have a much more considerable effect on fish stocks than seals do. Part of the monitoring of fish stocks must include an analysis of why fish stocks in Scottish waters might be declining.

Presiding Officer's Statement

12:31

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I want to detain members for just a couple of minutes. At long last, I can today inform Parliament of the arrangements for our migration to Holyrood, our occupation of the building and its formal opening. Members can start packing at the end of June. They should be out of their present offices by 20 August. Members will have entry to their new offices during the week commencing 30 August. We shall meet in the new chamber in the second week of September.

The official opening of the new building by Her Majesty the Queen will be on Saturday 9 October. Detailed arrangements for the opening will be announced nearer the event but, after discussion with party leaders, I can give the broad outline today.

It will be a day for the whole community of Scotland—a day of quiet Scottish dignity. The day will have three elements: a morning meeting in Old Parliament Hall, a riding down the Royal Mile and the formal opening in the chamber. The riding marks the centuries-old Scots tradition of Parliament and people working in public partnership.

Only 10 per cent of those who will take part in the events on the day will be MSPs. Each member will be asked to nominate a person from their constituency who has done most for the public good. They will walk, too, as will schoolchildren and civic representatives from throughout Scotland. There will be a large contingent of Speakers and Presidents from Parliaments in the United Kingdom, Europe and the Commonwealth.

The cost to Parliament for the whole day will be £210,000.

Lastly, let me say this. In my evidence to the Fraser inquiry, I apologised for the shadow that Holyrood, with all its attendant costs and delays, has cast over Scotland. Today, I thank those who have stayed resolutely focused and kept up the intense pressure to occupy the building in September.

Before we get on, we have to get in. The opening on 9 October marks a new beginning. It will be an opportunity for us all to concentrate on why we are here: not to build a building, but to build a better Scotland.

I have today written to every member, enclosing a briefing pack. If members have additional questions once they have studied it, the pack explains how to obtain further information.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: I will take this point of order if it is a genuine point of order and not a point of information.

Dennis Canavan: Will we be provided with a breakdown of the £210,000 that you mentioned?

The Presiding Officer: I will make that available this afternoon.

12:33

Meeting suspended.

14:00

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education, Tourism, Culture and Sport

Sport (Lottery Funding)

1. Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I declare an interest in that members of my family have received grants from sportscotland.

To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it will take in light of the diversion of lottery funding for sport towards London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic games. (S2O-2039)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety): I want to make clear that there is no intention that sportscotland's share of the lottery sports fund will be diverted to pay for facilities in London. Sportscotland and the other distributors of the lottery sports fund will be expected to spend a combined total of £340 million on talented athlete development and the improvement of facilities for elite athletes and communities in their own countries.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the minister aware that sportscotland has indicated that, in the coming year, the maximum grant that it will give for capital works will be £750,000, and that funds will permit it to make only one such grant? Given that investment in sports facilities, inter alia, must increase if we are to train the next generation of successful athletes, what steps does he plan to take to ensure that the £40 million lost from Scottish sports funding does not lead to the further demotion of Scotland down the league table of international sports achievement?

Mr McAveety: Sportscotland's strategy is in response to the decline in overall lottery ticket sales. It reflects wider changes in the purchasing of lottery tickets, so it is wise that the entry point for contributions that can be made by sportscotland has been redefined.

Members will know that the Executive is committed to the enhancement and development of a number of facilities for sports, right across Scotland. We recognise the important role of sport in the lives of Scottish people. That is why we have recently had the closure date for the national and regional facilities programme. We hope that, overall, £50 million will be available from the public purse to develop our broad commitments for national and regional facilities. Sportscotland is

presently evaluating all the bids. I hope that it will reflect our ambition that those national and regional facilities should reach out to the whole of Scotland.

Outdoor Education (Safety)

2. Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it last reviewed its guidance on safety in outdoor education. (S2O-1965)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): The Executive is currently working with local authority representatives to update the relevant guidance.

Christine May: The minister will recall that, in his reply to me on 18 March in the chamber, he said that he expected the physical education review to report on increasing the inclusion in school activity of minority sports such as off-road biking—which is planned for Methil in my constituency—and skateboarding, for which facilities are increasingly being provided with Executive funds. Those sports bring risks that may be different from those of traditional sports, so will the minister ensure that any review encompasses the risks associated with non-mainstream sports? Will he also ensure that the future of those sports in schools is not jeopardised by a lack of proper safety provision?

Peter Peacock: Christine May—I hope that I have got her name right this time, unlike the last time—raises an important point. She is right to say that we would like the range of sports and outdoor activities to be extended in schools and, indeed, beyond schools. We must ensure that our guidelines cover those types of sports so that they are not accidentally excluded from the list of sports in which people can participate just because of a lack of safety guidance. I am happy to ask officials to ensure that such sports are covered in the new guidance, which we hope to publish later this year.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): The minister may be aware that the City of Edinburgh Council and, indeed, a head teacher are facing criminal charges in relation to the near-drowning of a six-year-old boy. There is a danger that young people may not participate in sport if we do not ensure that their safety is paramount. However, there is also a danger that teachers will become more resistant to taking part in educational visits and outdoor education. Will the minister ensure that the guidance that he produces takes account of what has happened in England, where an educational visits advisory council has recently been established? We must have robust guidance and we must have support that gives protection both to children and to teachers when engaging in outdoor education and visits.

Peter Peacock: Fiona Hyslop will appreciate that I am unable to comment on the specific instance that has been reported today in relation to Edinburgh because it is potentially subject to legal proceedings. The City of Edinburgh Council and other councils will have their own guidelines and will have a comprehensive policy; indeed, that will perhaps be the case with Edinburgh more than with many other authorities, because of its difficulties in relation to the Cairngorm tragedy of about 30 years ago. The council will be alert to the policy implications that arise from such matters.

Fiona Hyslop makes an important point, however. It is important to encourage young people to participate in sport, and to participate in outdoor education, which involves risk at some level. It is important that proper planning is undertaken, and that there are proper guidelines and policies in place—including all the health and safety provisions that local authorities are obliged to follow in law—so that young people can feel safe to take part in those activities, so that the risks are controlled and defined and, equally, so that teachers can feel part of that process. That is one of the reasons why the Executive is reviewing the guidance and is considering what lessons it can learn from England and Wales. Although the Executive will not slavishly follow what has happened in England and Wales, it will do what is appropriate in the Scottish context, following its discussions with representatives of outdoor education in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Will the minister ensure that, while pupil safety must remain a paramount priority at all times, the guidance is sufficiently concise, relevant and to the point not to put off those wishing to participate in healthy outdoor pursuits? If the guidance is kept concise and relevant, it should succeed in its purpose.

Peter Peacock: One of the reasons why the Executive has slightly delayed publishing the guidance, which has been worked on for a number of months, is to ensure that the guidance covers all the angles that the Executive wants it to cover. The guidance should try to find a balance and to encourage young people to participate, while taking risks within that participation—that is the nature of some outdoor activities. However, outdoor education also has benefits for the personal growth of young people, who can assess their own risk as part of the framework in which they learn. It is vital that the Executive ensures that safety is the first priority. That is entirely achievable, provided the Executive gets the guidance correct and gets the balance correct within the guidance. The Executive will seek to do just as Lord James has suggested.

Looked-after Children (Mental Health Services)

3. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will respond to the chief social work inspector's findings in his report "Progress with Complexity" that mental health services for looked-after children are inadequate in most areas. (S2O-2032)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Euan Robson): We are working with our expert child health support group to promote children and young people's mental health and to ensure better delivery of child and adolescent mental health services for those who need them. That includes services for vulnerable children and young people, such as those who are looked after by local authorities.

Scott Barrie: As the minister will be aware—this was highlighted again in this morning's debate—there are major shortcomings in obtaining psychiatric assistance and in recruiting clinical psychologists for children and young people. As we all know, however, looked-after children suffer disproportionately from mental health difficulties compared with the general child care population. Can the minister assure me that looked-after young people will receive the assistance that they require to prevent further exacerbation of their difficulties? Will the Scottish Executive ensure that those people who rely on services that cut across departmental boundaries are given sufficient priority to ensure that their needs are fully met?

Euan Robson: I am grateful to the member for his comments. He takes a great deal of interest in the matter, and has had previous professional experience. He will know that a child and adolescent mental health development group has been established to draw on the expertise of colleagues from the national health service, education, social work and the voluntary sector. The major force of the development group's work is implementation of the recommendations made in the Scottish needs assessment programme—SNAP—report on child and adolescent mental health, which was published in March 2003. The group is currently focusing on the development of a template for child and adolescent mental health, which will expand on the child health support group's original template for child health services, to set out essential components of a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service. The aim is to develop an explicit and observable child mental health provision, which can be used by health boards and their partners throughout Scotland to assess and plan child mental health arrangements. The template is expected to be ready by the end of the year.

On the point about work force shortages, the Executive is well aware of the position and, as Scott Barrie rightly says, the vulnerability of

looked-after children. That is why a national child mental health work force group has been established—it met for the first time on 24 March. The group has been formed specifically to build a coherent path to work force planning for child mental health services. It will link closely with the national mental health work force group and the child health development group. The membership of the group is a partnership of people who are involved in work force planning. I look forward to the development of its work in due course.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): We introduced the new format of question time so that we could have in-depth answers—that was a supreme example of one.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister ensure that mental health services for looked-after and other children recognise and diagnose communication impairment? Earlier this week, speech therapists to whom I spoke told me how much they can do for those children. Will the minister ensure that speech therapists are included?

Euan Robson: Yes.

Schools (Local Authority Spending)

4. Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether, in light of current underspends in various local authorities, it will direct such local authorities to spend these available resources on schools. (S2O-2007)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): It is for each local authority to decide how best to manage its finances and allocate its resources, and to be held accountable for its decisions locally.

Ms Byrne: Given the proposed closures of rural schools in the Borders and the £3.5 million budget underspend that is predicted for the Scottish Borders Council in 2003-04, does the minister agree that the council should put that money into upgrading the schools that are under threat of closure because of the poor state of the buildings and facilities?

Peter Peacock: As I suggested, the decisions in that instance are for the Scottish Borders Council, as similar decisions in other cases are for other local authorities. Furthermore, Rosemary Byrne makes two basic errors. The Scottish Borders Council still does not know the outcome of its expenditure for last year because it will not close its books until the end of this month, which means that there may be some variance in the figure to which she referred. In any event, a one-year variance from the budget would not be sufficient to cover the cost of a school for the next 40, 50 or 60 years, which is the timescale in which investments

take place.

In addition to all the other investments that the Executive makes, we invest heavily in new schools the length and breadth of Scotland and support local authorities in their investments. The Scottish Socialist Party does not support our approach to building new schools—it would cancel the projects if it had the opportunity. However, we will keep investing in that approach, which will continue to improve education in Scotland.

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): Does the Executive plan to direct local authorities to use underspends to provide adequate remuneration, in line with the foster care allowance, to grandparents who provide kinship care for their grandchildren at the request of local councils, to enable those grandchildren to participate in sport on an equitable basis?

Peter Peacock: Local authority underspends are matters for the local authority. On the wider point that Mr Swinburne raises, we are aware of the issues that arise about grandparents' rights and we are keen to work through those issues and make progress on them. I am happy to have a discussion about that with Mr Swinburne if he wishes.

Local Tourism Hubs

5. Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made on the new local tourism hubs network strategy. (S2O-2016)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Mr Frank McAveety): A project to merge the 14 area tourist boards with VisitScotland is in its early stages. The objective is to have the new tourism network operating from April 2005.

Nora Radcliffe: How will democratic accountability be continued in the new set-up? Will satellite areas have a degree of autonomy to pursue strategies that are tailored to their requirements?

Mr McAveety: The primary objective will be for tourism agencies throughout Scotland to work together locally and nationally to grow the opportunity to visit Scotland. That applies to the internal domestic market in the United Kingdom and to the international market. I have had early-initiative discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to consider how we can meet the aspirations for local democratic input. I will endeavour to work on that issue, which is why I will chair the major task group that will consider how we can address many of the concerns.

I reassure members that the shaping and influencing of the new tourism network is at an early stage. A contribution can be made locally on

how best the network can be delivered. We want to keep what is best locally and enhance what is best nationally so that we get the best from both levels.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the minister join me in welcoming today's announcement that the VisitScotland expo will return to Aberdeen next year, which will bring tourism industry representatives from throughout the globe back to the city? Is that a positive sign that the new hub structure will lead not to a loss of local influence but to a strategy that meets the tourism industry's needs throughout Scotland?

Mr McAveety: I was delighted that my colleague was present at the expo yesterday in Aberdeen, to see the good work and the high-quality tourism product from throughout Scotland. I hope that the expo will enhance the profile not only of Aberdeen, but of Scottish tourism. As I said, identifying what is best for local areas and maximising what can be done for our overall product are integral to the debate.

I give the assurance that we want to work with local providers to ensure that they feel engaged in the process over the next year. I have given VisitScotland a clear signal about how it will wish to interact.

Yesterday morning was good for Aberdeen and I understand that yesterday evening was even better.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister join me in congratulating the Highlands on achieving seventh place among 115 world destinations for sustainable tourism? [Applause.]

Will the minister explain how hubs that are populated by people in ivory towers, who often have no practical experience, will do a better job than area tourist board directors, who have local expertise? Where will funding for local tourism now come from? Will he consider keeping area tourist boards as autonomous membership organisations with expertise in their areas while giving VisitScotland the responsibility of marketing Scotland throughout the United Kingdom and abroad?

Mr McAveety: I assure Jamie McGrigor that the clapping was for the achievement of the Highlands rather than the quality of his question. The achievement is tremendous. I pay tribute to the Highlands and Islands for the work that has been done on sustainable tourism. We have the ambition of growing sustainable tourism in the next few years. That commitment is shown by VisitScotland's award scheme.

As I said, we are trying to respond where we can to local needs. I give the assurance that the new

tourism networks will be shaped as much by positive local experience as by the expertise and quality that should exist in our national tourism agency. Some members of major task groups will be key personnel from the existing area tourist board network, including three fine chief executives. I hope that that reassures Jamie McGrigor that we want to address those areas' needs. I understand that one of the key chief executives who has been appointed is from a west Highland tourist board. I hope that the contribution of those people to the discussion is positive.

Miss X Case

6. Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures it will take as a result of the findings of the report on the Miss X case. (S2O-2048)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): The report from the social work services inspectorate on the Scottish Borders Council case will be published shortly, together with the actions that the Scottish Executive will take.

Christine Grahame: That is no surprise. The minister has an extremely strange definition of the word "shortly". Is he aware that he has made the front page of the *Southern Reporter* under the headline "A deafening silence"? The article says:

"JUSTICE delayed is justice denied",

not only to Miss X, but to the good social workers in the Scottish Borders, who are blighted under the current cloud.

Why did the minister tell me in a letter of 3 April that he had the report and that he would publish it and make his response soon? Three weeks have passed, but his response is not out and the report has not been published. When will the deafening silence end and when will we hear answers to the very serious questions?

Peter Peacock: The silence—such as it is—will end shortly, as I said. Christine Grahame has been grandstanding on the issue for some time, but the case is extraordinarily serious. [Interruption.] There is no point in waving a copy of the *Southern Reporter* at me. I have great respect for the newspaper, but I will not be rushed or bounced into responding by anybody.

Christine Grahame: Rushed?

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Peter Peacock: The report raises serious issues. I saw the report for the first time on 12 March and I have taken extensive advice on it. I have asked a series of searching questions about it and its implications, and that will prepare the way for me to respond publicly to the report very

soon. I will report to the Parliament and give it every opportunity to scrutinise my actions and to hear about the situation in full. I simply will not be bounced into doing that prematurely.

School Education (Sustainable Development)

7. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what importance it places on school education about environmentally and socially sustainable development. (S2O-2053)

The Minister for Education and Young People (Peter Peacock): I regard education for sustainable development as being very important.

Patrick Harvie: I am pleased to hear that.

Is the minister aware of the report that was published during the recess by WWF Scotland, entitled "Arrested development: A review of Scottish Office/Scottish Executive commitment to education for sustainable development (ESD) in Scotland"? That report states that Scotland now lags behind the rest of the UK in the vital task of placing sustainability at the heart of education and training. Does he agree that that is unacceptable? Will he tell us what will be done and when in order to rectify the situation? Will he give a commitment to act on the report's recommendations?

Peter Peacock: I am aware of the report and I say to Patrick Harvie that he has quoted slightly selectively from it. The report is partly critical, but it also says that there are some encouraging messages in what the Executive is seeking to do, particularly in the opportunities that have been created through the work of the sustainable development education liaison group; our work on the sustainable secondary schools partnership; our work with RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, WWF Scotland and others; the support that we are giving for eco-schools throughout Scotland and the eco-schools initiative; the things that we are doing in relation to curriculum development and curriculum materials that we are putting into schools; and the fact that we are now monitoring the performance of local authorities in relation to the eco-schools programme. Those are all signals that we take the issue seriously. We are trying to embed sustainable development thinking as an integral part of the curriculum and we intend to continue to do so.

The Presiding Officer: Before we move to questions on finance, public services and communities, I will allow a slight pause as ministers take their positions.

Finance and Communities

Arbroath Supermarkets (Planning Inquiry)

1. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will make an announcement in respect of the planning inquiry into Arbroath supermarkets. (S2O-2043)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): The report of the public local inquiry into three supermarket proposals in Arbroath is currently under consideration by the Scottish ministers. Every effort will be made to reach an early decision.

Alex Johnstone: I thank the minister for her reply and am glad that consideration is continuing. However, I am sure that the minister understands that competition among supermarkets in Arbroath would deliver better pricing for people in Arbroath and surrounding districts. Consequently, will she explain to me why it has taken some 16 months to date—and it would appear that it will take longer—for an appeal that was lodged with the Executive as long ago as 6 February 2003 to be considered?

Mrs Mulligan: The original two applications were refused by the local council and therefore came to us on appeal. The applicants have up to six months to lodge an appeal, so the timescale can be elongated for that reason. However, given that there were a number of applications for supermarkets in the Arbroath area, the Executive considered that the most efficient method would be to hold the three inquiries at the same time in order to resolve the planning issues around the supermarket applications.

I should point out to the member that it is not the role of the planning system to arbitrate between supermarkets. However, I recognise the affordability issues that could benefit constituents in the area if competition should arise.

Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): Does the minister accept that the long delay in reaching a decision has led to uncertainty and unnecessary speculation on a matter that is of great importance to the local economy of Arbroath and Angus? Is she aware of the massive local support for the Asda supermarket application? Will she ensure that, one way or the other, a decision will be taken as quickly as possible to end the uncertainty and speculation and allow the local economy to make progress?

Mrs Mulligan: It is essential that the planning procedures are conformed with when such applications are considered. Considering all three applications at the same time was the most sensible thing to do. It is essential for local people to be given the opportunity to partake in such inquiries and I believe that that has been the case.

Debt Advice

2. Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what steps are being taken to ensure that free debt advice is

available to all who require it. (S2O-1981)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): We announced in January an extra £4 million of new funding for free money and debt advice for 2004-05 and 2005-06. That funding will be used to develop money advice services for vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minority communities, lone parents and people with mental health issues, and to boost the £3 million annually that is already provided to local authorities by the Executive.

Paul Martin: Is the minister aware of a statement that was made by the chairman of the HSBC Bank, which made a pre-tax profit of £6.86 billion? He advised that it was a very good year for HSBC. It was not such a good year, however, for many of those who find themselves in debt. Is it not time for us to call on our banking giants to provide funding so that we can deliver independent and objective financial advice in our local communities?

Mrs Mulligan: The Executive will continue to look at a number of ways of providing money advice, particularly to those with debt problems—we recognise the problems that they experience. We are also in conversation with the banks about how they can lend assistance to those who have particular problems in accessing money at affordable rates. Credit unions have provided a great way of assisting in some communities, but there are other ways in which the banks can assist people to access money and advice.

Access to Credit

3. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action within its responsibilities it is taking to support those who are excluded from using the traditional financial sector due to their credit history. (S2O-2031)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): We believe that credit unions have a vital role to play as they provide access to small loans at affordable interest rates, while at the same time encouraging a savings culture, which is a long-term way out of money problems. We want to help to market and develop credit unions and have offered a range of support including the £1.1 million capacity fund that we announced in September 2003 to help those credit unions best placed to serve low-income households to grow their membership.

Jackie Baillie: I acknowledge that the Executive recognises the importance of credit unions. However, should we not push the traditional financial sector to do more? In that regard, will the minister consider promoting the uptake of basic bank accounts and look to spread the model of the Wester Hailes community banking agreement

throughout communities in Scotland?

Mrs Mulligan: The most recent figures that we have show that 5.4 million basic bank accounts were opened by June 2002 in the UK. We recognise that there are advantages to increasing that number and, as I said in response to Paul Martin, we are in discussions with the banks as to how we can develop that further.

The Executive is also looking at the example of the community banking facilities that were established in Wester Hailes through Wester Hailes Representative Council and HBOS. We want to learn lessons from that example. Although some communities could benefit from it, we might need to look at other options for other communities. We are determined to provide assistance to people to access financial services throughout all our communities in Scotland.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): I thank the Presiding Officer for taking my question now as that will allow continuity with the current topic. I welcome the Executive's initiatives—its support for money advice agencies, its commitment to assist the credit union movement and its recognition of the valuable work that people do voluntarily in our communities. Does the minister agree that the numbers of people who find themselves with multiple debts, but who are still able to find lenders to lend them money or give them cards to get them deeper into debt, is of genuine concern? The points made by Paul Martin and Jackie Baillie are serious and show that all of us must have been thinking along the same lines this week. It is time that the Scottish Executive made proposals to deal with the trend. Such debt affects people of all ages, young and old, and it is too easy for people to fall into serious debt.

Mrs Mulligan: We recognise what the attractions might be of loan sharks and others who can prove to be very expensive in the long term. For that reason, we are working with the Department of Trade and Industry on the review of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. We are also working with the DTI on a pilot scheme that is based in Glasgow, although it will be operating Scotland-wide, to look at how we can crack down on illegal money lenders and loan sharks and ensure that we protect people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, from those unscrupulous lenders.

Planning Applications (Protection of Communities)

4. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it will protect communities affected by planning applications that might have a negative impact on their environment or quality of life. (S2O-2013)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): The purpose of the planning system is to guide change through an efficient and effective process that respects the rights of the individual while acting in the interest of the wider community. Effective community engagement is essential in shaping a sustainable Scotland. Our modernising agenda for the planning system includes measures to enhance and strengthen public involvement in all stages of the planning system.

Donald Gorrie: I want to focus the minister's attention on the fact that many communities and councils are very angry at the way in which decisions that are made locally and democratically and have widespread support are overturned by the reporter at a public inquiry. Indeed, the most recent example involves Dundee City Council, which has sent material to members of all parties, asking them to raise this very point. I realise that some of the issues in question are controversial; however, if the reporter overturns a point of view that has very widespread support, surely communities must have some capacity to make their case in a higher court.

Mrs Mulligan: Of course the community still has the opportunity to take the matter further by seeking a review in the courts. However, the Executive and I are very anxious to ensure that people are involved in the planning process at the earliest possible stage. Doing so will secure the most effective outcomes for our communities instead of making them feel that they are up against those with other interests who perhaps do not recognise community interests.

Moreover, we must get people involved in developing the local plan and acknowledge the interests both of community groups and of applicants. The modernisation of the planning system will provide an even playing field to ensure that everyone's voice is listened to and that no one feels ignored.

Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill

5. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider amending section 90 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill to introduce a lower age limit for restriction of liberty orders. (S2O-2021)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): We are carefully considering this issue in light of the recommendations in the Communities Committee's stage 1 report. I am sure that the issue will be debated during stage 2 consideration of the bill, when we will make clear our considered position.

However, I say to Mr Rumbles that, in determining our position, I want to balance the implications of introducing a lower age limit for restriction of liberty orders, as mentioned in the committee report, against the risk of impeding the court's ability to impose an alternative to secure accommodation in cases in which that is considered suitable. I am reflecting on how we might best achieve such a balance.

Mike Rumbles: I thank the minister for that helpful reply. If she agrees that a progressive Government should examine the issue, will she consider accepting either her Labour colleague Elaine Smith's amendment or my own amendment, both of which would address the matter?

Mrs Mulligan: As far as I am aware, both the amendments that Mr Rumbles has mentioned seek to set age limits at which restriction of liberty orders can be made by the court. At the moment, I do not want to make a definitive response about that age limit.

That said, I direct the member's attention to the promise in the partnership agreement to

"provide sufficient secure accommodation and allow children who might otherwise be in secure accommodation to remain in the community through the use of electronic tagging".

We will look to that promise when we consider our position on this matter.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): On a point of order Presiding Officer. Is the chamber the appropriate forum in which to debate the merits of amendments that are under consideration elsewhere?

The Presiding Officer: It is unusual, and members will take note.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I draw the attention of the minister and the chamber to the fact that we are debating stage 2 of the bill in committee, and I assure everyone that those debates will be taken very seriously by committee members and others who attend. It would be more helpful to have a productive discussion there rather than in the chamber.

Will the minister assure me that she will work alongside the Communities Committee and other members at stage 2 on refining the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Bill to ensure that the proposals in the bill, including those on restriction

of liberty orders, are developed in a way that meets the reasonable demands of people for peace of mind in their homes, protects the victims of the antisocial behaviour of very young perpetrators and prevents young people from being drawn into becoming the perpetrators of antisocial behaviour? At present, we are not dealing with young people who create problems in our communities, and other young people are being lured into becoming involved with them.

Mrs Mulligan: In the interests of brevity, I can only say yes.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Planning Reform (Consultation)

7. Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making to ensure a comprehensive response to its consultation papers on planning reform. (S2O-2061)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Mrs Mary Mulligan): On 1 April of this year, as I am sure everyone is aware, we published the two consultation papers "Making Development Plans Deliver" and "Rights of Appeal in Planning". We are consulting widely. In the initial distribution of the consultation papers, we sent copies to a wide range of interested organisations and individuals. The consultations have been well publicised and we continue to provide copies of the papers to anyone who requests them. In addition, the consultation papers are available on the Executive's website. The consultation that I am proposing will be an active one in which we will meet all our stakeholders prior to the closing date of 30 July.

Mr Ruskell: The minister will be aware that it was originally envisaged that the people would be the second chamber of the Parliament. Planning reform and third-party rights of appeal are issues that directly concern the public. Will she consider using innovative ways of involving the public in the consultation, such as those that are being promoted by the Scottish Civic Forum? What should MSPs do to encourage the public's participation in the consultations?

Mrs Mulligan: I am always looking for new ways to involve the community of Scotland in the Parliament's deliberations. Last summer my colleague Margaret Curran, other ministers and I showed the way when we consulted on the antisocial behaviour legislation. Such consultation is about involving as many people as possible.

MSPs have a responsibility to talk to their communities and all the stakeholders in their constituencies about planning arrangements. I agree with Mr Ruskell that it is important that

people acknowledge the role that planning plays and take a view on how we should be developing our planning system for the future.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I welcome the minister's positive response. Will she consider making available simple and easy-to-copy versions of the consultation documents? I know that some people have had difficulty in getting multiple copies of them. We want to engage our constituents in the debate and the minister is right that we should have that debate through to the summer. That process would be facilitated by the provision of simple documents that we can access and then spread to our constituents.

Mrs Mulligan: I am more than happy to help with that process. I am aware of several innovative members of my group who have already put together simple, straightforward and understandable papers. They are already engaged with their communities in discussing planning matters. If we can be of any further assistance, of course that would be okay.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Consultation is one thing, but listening to the results of the consultation is another. My constituents are very concerned that their views were not taken into account during the earlier consultation on structure planning, and that the Executive decided to go ahead with city-region plans that will split Fife, despite the fact that the people of Fife overwhelmingly rejected those plans. They include 3,000 people in my constituency who submitted a petition to the Parliament that opposed the plans. Can the minister assure me that the Executive will listen to those who respond to the consultation on the operation of the planning system?

Mrs Mulligan: I assure Mr Smith that we will listen to those who are consulted. However, as I have said previously on planning issues, often we have to resolve different views. The planning system has a difficult role to play.

On Mr Smith's comments on the situation in Fife, it is a welcome development that local authorities now produce only one local plan, instead of the two-tier system of the past. The city-region plans are important because they recognise the overlapping nature of the areas to which they apply. It will benefit Fife to feed into both the Dundee city plan and the Edinburgh city plan, because it has much to do with both those areas. There are advantages to be sought.

General Questions

Borders Railway (Funding)

1. Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether, in light of recent newspaper reports, it has agreed its share of funding for the Borders railway. (S2O-2049)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): The Scottish Executive has not agreed its share of funding for the Borders railway in light of recent newspaper reports.

Christine Grahame: Well, there is an honest answer. However, how does that square with other newspaper reports, which I hope the minister has read, that his colleague Jeremy Purvis said—hint, hint—that we should not worry about the funding for the Waverley line because the coalition is committed to it? If Mr Purvis is right, how can the minister say what he just said? I presume that Mr Purvis is wrong and that there is no commitment to fund the Waverley line. Can the minister make the position clear once and for all?

Nicol Stephen: I notice that there are still no recent newspaper reports committing the Scottish National Party to the funding of the Waverley rail line. As recently as 31 March, I met the Waverley railway partnership at a meeting that was convened by Mr Purvis, Mr Robson and Ms Brankin, who actively promote the scheme with other members of the Executive and me to ensure that the Executive provides funding. We now have all the information that we require on the Waverley railway partnership's business case. I will be able to make a decision once I receive from my officials the full report on the completed business case, which I will get soon.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I am delighted that Miss Grahame is such an avid reader of my press releases. The minister will know that, at the meeting that I convened and chaired on behalf of constituents and the Waverley railway partnership, the issue was the importance of considering long-term, strategic planning for the benefits of the project. Does he agree that that is a better approach than one of carping from the sidelines?

Nicol Stephen: It is important to point out that if a new railway line is built in an area such as the Borders, it can bring significant economic, environmental and social benefits. I heard comments on the radio this morning—rather than getting them from one of Mr Purvis's or Ms Grahame's press releases—about general movements in housing costs in Scotland and how, in anticipation of the benefits of the Waverley line, there is growing confidence in the Borders and a shift in housing prices there. Investment in public

transport can result in such tangible benefits, which are encouraging to see.

We must go through the full process of analysis and consider all the economic and social benefits for the community. We must also consider the potential benefits for business from tourism and so on. All that work is being done. The Executive is anxious to support the Waverley line scheme, but the right appraisal process must be completed. I am pleased that, because of the meeting on 31 March, the councils and other partners in the Waverley railway partnership have responded. I believe that we have received all the information that is necessary to make a final decision.

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): So that I can clarify the position once and for all in my column in the *Border Telegraph*, will the minister tell us when he will make the announcement on the funding?

Nicol Stephen: The track record of the Conservative party, not only in relation to the Borders rail link but in relation to any of the other major public transport projects that the Executive is supporting, is non-existent. It was the Conservatives who pulled money out of public transport and neglected our railways for decades. Given such insecure foundations, it is interesting to see David Mundell now try to put Executive members under pressure on the issue. We are determined to make the decision soon. We are committed to the Borders rail project, as was pointed out in the partnership agreement, and I am confident that, over the next few years, not only with the Borders railway but with a £3 billion programme of investment in Scotland's transport over a 10-year period, we will start to transform the quality of public transport in Scotland. That is something to which I hope everyone in this chamber is committed.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): The minister and the Parliament will be familiar with my making the point that Midlothian has no train service whatsoever. It is one of the few areas in Scotland still to be in that position. With regard to the business case for the Waverley line, is the minister aware of the importance of being able to transport my constituents into Edinburgh in order to support the city's economy? Is that matter being considered in addition to the benefits to both Midlothian and the Borders?

Nicol Stephen: It is important to emphasise the fact that there are significant benefits to Midlothian, East Lothian and areas other than the Borders as a result of the Borders rail link to Edinburgh. All those benefits will be looked at and quantified as part of the assessment of the business case that comes forward from the Waverley railway partnership.

Another important announcement that was made this week concerned our investment in Waverley railway station. Without an expansion of the facilities and capacity at Waverley station, it would not be possible to accommodate all the ambitious plans that we have for the Borders railway, the Airdrie to Bathgate line or the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line. We want to invest in a whole range of improvements and it is vital that we get cracking with those decisions as soon as possible so that we can get on with the really important part of the job—implementing and delivering new rail projects on the ground.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I welcome the minister's answer and particularly his comments about not just developing the Waverley line but having somewhere for it to stop when it reaches Edinburgh. In the context of that answer, will he clarify whether the new platforms and train paths at Waverley station have the capacity to take the Waverley line, or whether other, much needed, central Scotland rail projects will be assumed in that welcome initial stage of the development of Waverley station?

Nicol Stephen: The initial stage that we announced this week, which will increase capacity from 24 trains per hour to 28 trains per hour, can accommodate the Borders railway line and the other projects that I mentioned.

Tolled Bridges (Review)

2. Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it intends to start the review of tolled bridges referred to in "A Partnership for a Better Scotland". (S2O-1972)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): Preparations for the review are at an advanced stage and I will make an announcement on the remit and programme for taking forward this work in due course.

Helen Eadie: In light of the calls for removal of the tolls on the Skye and Erskine bridges, will the minister have regard to the fact that the capital costs of building the Forth road bridge were repaid in 1996? Will he further note the economic situation in Fife, where the level of unemployment in central Fife is acute and is higher than in many other parts of Scotland? As one of the solutions to the problem, will he hear my call for the Forth road bridge tolls to be abolished as an outcome of the review? Will he join me in welcoming the news that the Scottish Trades Union Congress yesterday agreed a motion calling for another multimodal crossing over or under the Forth?

Nicol Stephen: All those issues will certainly be taken into consideration as part of the review. I met representatives of FETA—the Forth Estuary Transport Authority, which is responsible for the

bridge—to discuss the pressures that it faces and to encourage it to develop proposals for the crossing over the coming months.

It would be wrong for me to signal the removal of tolls on any of the bridges that will be included in the review, particularly the Forth bridge. The toll on that bridge is being increased from 80p to £1 and I know that that funding is crucial to FETA's future plans in relation to the maintenance of the bridge. The structure is around 40 years old and will require significant maintenance and investment over the coming decades. We will require to consider that matter, too, as part of the review.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the minister agree that a study into yet another Forth road bridge is a waste of resources and that we should focus on upgrading the existing infrastructure, starting with the signalling on the Forth rail bridge and finishing with the opening of stations at Methil, Leven and St Andrews?

Nicol Stephen: I agree there are significant shorter-term measures that we can take, such as the introduction of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, which will take pressure off the Forth rail bridge and allow us to upgrade to improve services to Fife. In relation to our longer-term view of the Forth crossing, which is vital for Scotland, I would like to see the balance of investment swing towards public transport and better public transport services for that crossing, but it would be wrong at this stage to rule out any of the options for the future.

Motorists (Assistance)

3. Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will take, or propose that Her Majesty's Government should take, any measures to assist the motorist in Scotland, in light of the necessity of a motor car for many people in rural and urban Scotland. (S2O-2038)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): I am pleased at the breadth of questions on transport issues in this general question time.

The Scottish Executive's rural petrol stations grant scheme is assisting motorists by helping to maintain a viable network of petrol stations and liquefied petroleum gas supplies in rural areas. There is no equivalent scheme at present in England. Also, through the Scottish energy efficiency office, the Executive funds two further programmes—powershift and autogas+—that support motorists who wish to convert their car or van to run on LPG. More than 500 vehicles benefited from those programmes in 2003-04. In addition, the Executive is investing more than £60

million on the trunk road network in the Highlands and Islands between 2003 and 2006.

Fergus Ewing: As the minister knows, the level of tax on fuel in Scotland is, thanks to the London Labour chancellor, the highest, or among the highest, in the world—although it is not high enough for the Liberal party. Can he explain what, in his view, is the justification for that dubious honour? Is there any reason connected with the environment? If so, can he explain the strange absence of massive clouds of smog scudding along our skyline? Is it the truth that the problem is not damage to the environment, but damage caused by the chancellor, and that the colour of the problem is not green but Brown?

Nicol Stephen: Fuel duty is a reserved matter, as Fergus Ewing correctly pointed out, and it would be wrong for me to comment on it in the chamber.

In his question, Fergus Ewing asserted that the motor car is a necessity for many people in rural parts of Scotland. I understand that totally, but there are many people in rural Scotland who do not have access to a motor car and it is important that we do whatever we can to support those individuals. Through the rural community transport initiative, more than 80 schemes are being funded throughout rural Scotland; those schemes try to give people, in particular elderly and disabled people, access to high-quality transport. A number of demand-responsive transport pilot schemes, such as dial-a-bus schemes, community bus schemes and voluntary car schemes, are also being funded. Such schemes are important for the future of rural Scotland and I commend campaigning for more of them to Fergus Ewing.

Prison Escort Services

4. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will review its policy on the privatisation of prison escort services. (S2O-2001)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson): As I made clear in my statement to Parliament yesterday, we are committed to those reforms because they will get more police on front-line operational duties. However, as I also made clear, I expect Reliance Secure Task Management Ltd to meet the terms of the contract and to deliver a high-quality service.

Dennis Canavan: Is it not absolutely farcical that sheriffs threaten strike action because of lack of security in their courts and that a private security guard with a van full of prisoners is reported to have had to ask directions on how to get to the prison? Does the minister not agree that when the state orders people to be taken into custody, the state should have direct responsibility

for ensuring that those people are kept in custody and should not pass on that responsibility to a private company whose main motive is profit rather than public safety?

Cathy Jamieson: As I outlined clearly in yesterday's statement, there will still be a police presence in and around the courts. Matters of court security are matters for the chief constable. In the lead-up to the award of the contract, a range of discussions took place on that issue. Reassurances were given that overall responsibility for security in the courts would not be removed from the police.

Over the past few weeks, there have been situations that simply should not have arisen. We are continuing to monitor matters extremely closely. The Scottish Prison Service is directly responsible for overseeing and monitoring the contract, ensuring that it is delivered effectively and reporting to me on its on-going operation.

Rail Services (Fife, Perth and Edinburgh)

5. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to improve rail services between Perth, Fife and Edinburgh. (S2O-2012)

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): The Scottish Executive is funding new trains and longer platforms that will lead to, for example, a 28 per cent increase in peak-time capacity on Fife services. The new Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line will also bring significant benefits. The Executive is of course prepared to consider any proposals that local authorities and their transport partners may promote for new or improved rail services between Perth, Fife and Edinburgh.

Murdo Fraser: The minister will be aware of the importance of good transport links with the capital for economic development in those areas. He is probably also aware that there is deep dissatisfaction among people in Fife about the level of service between Fife and Edinburgh. It is equally unacceptable to people in Perth that it can sometimes take two hours to get from Perth to Edinburgh. In the context of the renewal of the ScotRail franchise, will the minister outline what discussions he has had with the relevant authorities about driving up the service that is available to people in Perth and Fife?

Nicol Stephen: I welcome the fact that there is a demand for better public transport. In my view, there is a real opportunity to grow the market for passenger services on our railways in Scotland. Fife is certainly one of the prime candidates for improved services.

As I have said to the Parliament before, the current ScotRail franchise is based on the existing level of service. It would have been good to have

had a whole list of new and improved lines as part of that franchise, but it is recognised that, throughout the United Kingdom, there have been significant pressures on new investment in the rail industry. Some of the new franchises that have been let recently have involved cutbacks and there were assertions that we would go in that direction in Scotland. That was never the intention—we want to make improvements. For the first time in decades, we are building new lines in Scotland. Those new lines and all the improvements that I have discussed at question time today will be introduced as part of the new ScotRail franchise, once a new franchisee—a new contractor—is in place.

If proposals are made that get to an advanced stage, they will have to go through the normal appraisal process. Any of those improvements—whether they involve Perth, Fife or other parts of Scotland—can be introduced into the new ScotRail contract as an amendment to the franchise. That is guaranteed.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Does the minister agree that pressure on the Forth road bridge and congestion in Edinburgh can be relieved only by the provision of a fast, frequent and safe rail service from Fife and beyond? What hope can the minister give to frustrated commuters from Markinch, who have been waiting for the redevelopment of their station for five years, that the work to include toilets, disabled access and closed-circuit television will begin in the very near future?

Nicol Stephen: The delivery of such projects is not in my direct control, but I am keen to provide support for the funding, planning and appraisal of those projects. In relation to the Fife services, I have mentioned that there will be 29 new trains throughout Scotland, several of which will be targeted on services to the north of Edinburgh. That will benefit the Fife commuter services. I also want to mention the longer platforms at stations on the Fife circle and the benefits of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, which will take pressure off the Forth road bridge and will lead to further improvements in commuter services in the area.

I want to grow the market for public transport in Scotland, including the market for rail services, and to improve the service for commuters in Fife. I believe that the plans that we have put in place will deliver exactly that over the coming years.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general questions.

Point of Order

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Will parliamentary approval be sought for the £210,000 expenditure that is proposed for the opening of the new Holyrood building?

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The matter was approved by the appropriate designated body—the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body—for which the Parliament voted. I hope that you have had your briefing pack—

Dennis Canavan: Further to my point of order, I wish my dissent to be recorded. I was no party whatsoever to the approval of the expenditure.

The Presiding Officer: By raising the matter in the Parliament, your discontent is recorded. We will move on to the next debate.

Energy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-1185, in the name of Jim Wallace, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, and three amendments to the motion.

15:02

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Mr Jim Wallace): It is important to reflect on the fact that this debate is about a topic that, although it underpins much of our daily lives, we often take for granted. From the moment we wake up in the morning, we use energy: through using our alarm clocks, if we have an electric alarm clock, to using lighting, heating and transport. Energy is vital to the running of our businesses, schools and hospitals. In recent decades, our demand for more energy has regularly and consistently increased. We know that our lives would be very different without it; indeed, the lives of our communities would be significantly impoverished.

It is clear that we cannot continue simply to demand more energy and to generate more energy without giving thought to the long-term implications and limitations. That is why I believe that today's debate is on an important topic for our future not just in this country, but globally.

From the early days of the Scottish Parliament, the Executive has put the generation of renewable energy high up the political agenda. I believe that we face five significant challenges: to attain our target of generating 40 per cent of electricity in Scotland from renewable sources by 2020; to develop a range of renewables technologies that can achieve a balanced and consistent supply of energy; to exploit the major economic opportunities in developing and producing renewables technology by ensuring that we put Scottish business at the cutting edge of the emerging worldwide market; to reduce the amount of energy that we use and the costs to individuals and business through effective energy efficiency measures; and to address the threat that is posed by climate change in order to protect and enhance our environment.

The actions that we set out in our strategy just a year ago will help us to meet those objectives. They will enable us to help to create a thriving renewables industry in Scotland that will safeguard existing jobs and that will have the considerable potential to create new ones.

In the past 12 months, we established the forum for renewable energy development in Scotland—FREDS—under the chairmanship of my deputy minister, Lewis Macdonald. The forum brings

together industry, academia and government. Well before the end of the year, it will produce action plans for the development of marine energy and biomass. I believe that both those technologies provide us with good opportunities for increased economic development, export opportunities and rural regeneration. Marine energy technology is still in its infancy, but it provides a major opportunity for Scotland. We have potentially the largest marine energy resource in Europe and more than enough to satisfy Scotland's entire demand for electricity. Of course, there are formidable challenges associated with that, not least in developing marine devices to economic viability. FREDS is considering those challenges.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Deputy First Minister will be aware that the Portuguese Government has stimulated the market for wave technology by means of tariff subsidy. Is the Scottish Executive prepared to consider a similar scheme to bring such new initiatives to the marketplace here?

Mr Wallace: I would certainly not rule that out. However, in making comparisons with Portugal, we should consider the facts that our national resource is better, that we are further ahead of the Portuguese in our academic approach and that we have several designers and developers in the field. Portugal might also offer us export opportunities. The developments there present us with a challenge, but it is one that we can meet. They also present us with an opportunity. If we can develop cutting-edge work, there will be opportunities for an export market, to which we are highly alert.

On marine technology, we have committed, as the Parliament will know, more than £2 million towards the establishment of a wave device test centre off the coast of Orkney, which will play a major role in enabling the many device designs that have been developed to prove their worth. The first of those, Ocean Power Delivery's Pelamis, will commence testing during the next few weeks. It was with a sense of great pride that those of us who were in Leith a few weeks ago for the launch of the first full-scale prototype of the device were able to see it and to appreciate the academic and engineering expertise that was necessary to develop it, as well as the fact that the prototype is from Scotland. With our partners, we are considering the possible extension of the Orkney centre to enable it to test tidal stream devices as well.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): How long does the minister expect it will be before the Pelamis project becomes a commercial reality? The question whether we meet our targets is very much tied up with the answer to that.

Mr Wallace: One of the purposes of the test centre is to ensure that the necessary facilities are in place for the technology to prove its worth. It would be invidious to put a timescale on that, but we all recognise the importance of pressing on with the work. I very much look forward to seeing Pelamis off the coast of my constituency and the work that will be done with it.

I welcome the fact that one of the main sub-groups of FREDS is on marine energy. The sub-group brings together people from business and academia, as well as allowing for a political input. As that shows, we want to ensure that any barriers to the development of marine energy can be eliminated. There is a real sense of urgency and commitment around taking that forward.

The use of biomass for energy has not yet taken off in Scotland, despite the huge natural resource in our forestry industry, which represents a significant opportunity for Scotland to grasp. That is why FREDS has been asked to give urgent consideration to the actions that are needed to increase the penetration of biomass technologies.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Will the minister give way?

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

Mr Wallace: I think that Christine May got in first.

Christine May: Does the Deputy First Minister accept that it might be necessary for the Executive to intervene with additional support for the biomass industry in order to kick-start it and to get it to the level that we want it to be at?

Mr Wallace: That is very much the sort of issue that the FREDS sub-group has been asked to consider—what are the things that we can do to assist with the use of biomass? We hope that the sub-group will report later in the year, after which we will be in a better position to identify the measures that we need to take in order to give a kick start, as Christine May described it, to the biomass industry.

In all fairness, I should now give way to Jeremy Purvis.

Jeremy Purvis: I am grateful to the Deputy First Minister. Will he ensure that, given that the Minister for Communities' affordable housing review is now being carried out, there will be an opportunity for social housing to benefit from combined heat and power plants? That could be exactly the sort of thing that could stimulate the development of renewables in the public sector.

Mr Wallace: A whole range of things can be done on combined heat and power and on the heating of housing and public buildings. For

example, there are opportunities for thermal heat pumps. That is another technology that has not taken off in Scotland as much as it has elsewhere. In continental Europe, there have been huge and exponential advances in its use and I think that we will see that in Scotland as well. Jeremy Purvis is right to identify some of the opportunities that can not only help to ensure that we are better stewards of our natural resources, but result in job opportunities.

Together, wind power, wave, biomass and other renewables technologies represent a range of renewable energy sources that will provide a consistent and balanced energy supply. If that can be achieved, it will be a huge prize not only for Scotland, but for the world.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Mr Wallace: I have been pretty good at taking interventions, but I will take one more, from John Scott.

John Scott: When will all the fine ideas that the minister is talking about become a commercial reality? Will they deliver a worthwhile amount of energy?

Mr Wallace: The target is that 18 per cent of electricity will be generated by renewable sources by 2010, which we believe we are on course to deliver. Although it is a challenge to us to deliver 40 per cent of our electricity generation from renewable sources by 2020, I believe that it can be done, which is why we are taking action to ensure that we contribute to meeting that target through marine and biomass technology and through saving energy, so that the base to which the percentage is applied is lower.

I will now deal with the economic advantages and opportunities. We are committed to developing and implementing a green jobs strategy to help Scotland to realise the significant business, environmental and employment benefits of a greener economy, of which renewable energy will be an important part. The strategy is focused on how best to create and support indigenous wealth, jobs and opportunities; in the coming weeks, I will launch a major public consultation exercise on it. I am confident that one of the reasons why we can benefit from the strategy is that it plays to many of Scotland's traditional strengths, such as innovation, engineering, manufacturing and exporting. New skills will certainly be needed, but they can be developed alongside existing skills. I am sure that Scottish business and education can rise to the challenge.

Our strategy for growing the renewables sector supports a range of renewables technologies at grass-roots level. In the next three years, we will invest more than £5 million in the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative for small-scale wind, solar, biomass, hydro, marine and geothermal energy projects.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Mr Wallace: I have been pretty generous until now and I want to make progress. If I have time, I will give way later.

As well as promoting renewable energy, we must take steps to reduce our demand for energy. The partnership agreement acknowledges that it is vital to make efficient use of our energy sources. Last month, I announced £20 million of new funding to implement energy efficiency measures that will reduce carbon emissions through a scheme covering all local authorities and health boards and Scottish Water. It is intended that the scheme will involve revolving funds to be administered locally.

Although some of the savings from energy efficiency measures will be reinvested in new measures, most of them will be invested in front-line services. That will build on the work of the Scottish energy efficiency office, which carried out more than 600 energy audits in 2003-04. Those are estimated to have identified potential savings to Scottish businesses of around £15 million and carbon savings of 228,000 tonnes, which is enough to power 35,000 homes for a year.

Domestic energy efficiency has improved in recent years. In 1996, only 7 per cent of Scottish homes had high energy efficiency ratings, but that figure has increased to nearly one third of Scottish homes by 2002.

I have set out briefly the action that we are taking to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. There is an opportunity for business as well as a requirement to protect and enhance our environment. I know that we cannot be complacent, but the actions that I have outlined today and the record of the Administration in promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency show the importance that we attach to addressing the issue and identifying not only the challenges that we want to meet, but the opportunities that exist for our businesses as we try to bring some of our ideas to reality.

I move,

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's targets to generate increasing amounts of electricity from renewable sources; notes that Scottish ministers have, in the last two years, approved 600 megawatts of wind farms and 7 megawatts of hydro power schemes and that Scottish local authorities in the same period have

consented to approximately 170 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity; acknowledges the contribution of the Scottish Community and Householder Renewables Initiative in encouraging renewable energy capacity building for communities; acknowledges the long-term potential for the development of renewable energy technologies, including the associated economic benefits and rural regeneration and export opportunities; welcomes the associated drive to increase energy efficiency measures across Scotland, including the recent announcement of the public sector energy efficiency fund and the environmental best practice being promoted by the Scottish Energy Efficiency Office; also recognises the contribution that both renewable energy and energy efficiency make to reducing carbon emissions, and supports the Executive's commitment to tackling climate change.

15:14

Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): Moving towards renewable and greener sources of energy is an essential part of reducing our carbon emissions. The Scottish Power briefing indicates that its existing wind farms alone will reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Scotland by more than 3.5 million tonnes over the next 25 years. The threat of climate change is real and we ignore it at our peril.

The need to reduce carbon emissions is only one of the reasons why we must go down the renewables road. For all my concerns about the way in which the wind energy market is being developed, I have no doubt that I would rather see in my back yard a field of wind turbines than a nuclear reactor leaking goodness knows what and leaving an environmental legacy to be dealt with by generations to come.

Phil Gallie: Roseanna Cunningham's amendment mentions a target of 25 per cent renewable energy by 2010. Given the fact that peak demand in Scotland can reach almost 6,000 megawatts, does she believe that that target is achievable? Can she guarantee that there will be sufficient back-up plant to ensure that peak demand is met and that there will be stability of supply?

Roseanna Cunningham: That certainly is achievable. However, the closer we get to 2010 without meeting that target, the less likely it is to be achieved. We need to work towards the target in order to meet it. I will address that issue later.

The nuclear industry lobbyists have been hard at work yet again and there have been reports in the newspapers this week punting calls for nuclear power to be promoted ahead of wind and other renewable energy sources. I know that there are some cheerleaders for the nuclear industry in the chamber, but I hope that the rest of us will make it known that there is no support in Scotland for going down the nuclear road. Regardless of what the nuclear apologists might claim, nuclear power is not green, clean or renewable.

The Executive's targets for renewable energy production are a step in the right direction, but we need to be even more ambitious if we are to become a leading player in the renewable energy industry. Other European nations are well ahead of us, which may be an answer to Phil Gallie's question. For example, 29 per cent of Swedish electricity generation comes from renewable sources. In Finland the figure is 22 per cent and in Austria it is 21 per cent. I want us to release Scotland's massive potential for electricity production from renewable sources and I would set a target for the production of electricity from renewables at 25 per cent by 2010, with a progressive build-up capacity leading up to 40 per cent by 2020.

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): I hear what Roseanna Cunningham is saying. In her view, is the best way of releasing that renewables potential to make it easier to develop wind energy production or to make it more difficult?

Roseanna Cunningham: The best way of doing it is to ensure that the widest range of renewable energy technologies is available to most people in Scotland.

Understandably, new technologies inevitably take a while to become commercially viable on a large scale. At present, apart from hydro generation—which is well established—wind turbine generation is the main commercially viable new renewable energy technology. As such, it has an important contribution to make to the mix of Scotland's energy generation, although it cannot be the only contributor.

However, hostility is being created by the absence of clear, concise and coherent national guidelines for the approval of wind farm sites. Friends of the Earth thinks that such guidelines are necessary for all renewable energy technologies, especially in view of their cumulative impact. The publication of local guidelines on wind farms is welcome, but the continuing silence of the Executive on proposals to generate more than 50MW is causing untold damage. I have little doubt that many of the more contentious proposals will be rejected, but the effect of the cack-handed way in which the Executive has dealt with the whole issue is that many individuals and communities will have had their hackles raised by the system. There is a real danger that public support for the wider case for wind farms and renewable energy will be undermined.

Local communities and wind farm developments can get along together beneficially. In Argyll, Scottish Power's first two wind farms have contributed tens of thousands of pounds every year to community trust funds. That is good news for those communities. The Executive should be

doing more to encourage all developers to recognise their responsibilities towards local communities so that the communities can benefit from developments on their doorstep.

It would be better yet if the involvement of communities and individuals in power generation came from the bottom up rather than from the top down. At present, power generation is almost exclusively developer led. I am aware of the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative. Although it is early in the day to comment on its effectiveness, I would like much more to be done to promote and assist community-led renewable energy projects.

At national level, we need to encourage the development of a wide range of renewable technologies, for economic as well as environmental reasons. The issue is not just about research and development funding, but about investing in the industries.

Murdo Fraser has already mentioned the Portuguese example. Portugal is determined to become a market leader and is offering a level of funding that provides a firm support framework for early technology. In return, the Portuguese are understandably looking to attract companies to establish manufacturing in Portugal. The worst-case scenario, which we have to be careful to avoid, is one in which technologies that are initially developed in Scotland by Scottish companies are used to establish new industries in countries other than Scotland, such as Portugal.

We should be ambitious for Scotland, to the point that Scotland becomes the first place that people think of when they think of renewable energy innovations. We need to consider investing in a wide range of renewable projects, including biomass, geothermals and hydrogen fuel cells for the storage of energy. WWF Scotland believes that around 24,000 jobs could be created in the renewables industry. The industry could therefore be very important economically for Scotland.

I am aware that I have devoted the bulk of my speech to the importance of renewable energy. However, we must not overlook the equivalent importance of improving energy efficiency and addressing our continually increasing demand for electricity. Unless we address that side of the equation, all the good work done in setting and meeting targets for renewable energy production—regardless of whose targets we choose—will be cancelled out by increases in consumption.

I do not doubt that most parties in the chamber desire to make Scotland the green powerhouse of Europe. It is just a pity that the Scotland Act 1998 reserves to Westminster the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity

and leaves the Executive with the power only to promote renewable energy development. If our country is to become a powerhouse, our Parliament must become one, too. That will require independence.

I move amendment S2M-1185.1, to leave out from “endorses” to end and insert:

“recognises the contribution that both renewable energy and energy efficiency make to tackling carbon emissions; further recognises the importance of tackling climate change; agrees, therefore, to raise the Scottish Executive’s targets for generating increasing amounts of electricity from renewable resources to 25% of electricity generation capacity by 2010, 30% by 2015 and 50% by 2020; regrets that energy policy is largely reserved to Westminster and rejects calls for an expansion of the nuclear contribution to Scotland’s electricity production; acknowledges the important contribution that can be made by small-scale, domestic and community-based renewable energy projects; notes the recent growth in applications for wind farm developments and regrets the absence of clear, concise and coherent guidelines for the approval of such developments; acknowledges the long-term potential for the development of renewable energy technologies, including the associated economic benefits and rural regeneration and export opportunities, and urges the Executive to ensure that these technologies are supported beyond the research and development stage to ensure that Scotland can become a world leader in renewable energy technologies.”

15:22

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to debate the Executive’s policy on renewable energy and to highlight its current policy failures. We also have the opportunity to expose the gaping black hole at the heart of Executive policy, which is the lack of any forward energy strategy.

We have heard a lot from the Executive about its targets for renewable energy—18 per cent by 2010 and 40 per cent by 2020. However, the Executive must be aware of growing scepticism about the achievability of those targets. Some weeks ago, the former Labour energy minister, Brian Wilson MP, questioned whether the targets were achievable. In the briefing for today’s debate, Unison, the trade union that is most involved in the energy industry, says that it does not believe that the 40 per cent target is achievable. The United Kingdom’s leading engineer, Sir Alec Broers, who is the president of the Royal Academy of Engineering, has said that the UK targets are unrealistic.

Notwithstanding the public scepticism, the Executive seems hell-bent on rushing ahead with its current strategy. However, that strategy is not, sadly, a renewables strategy at all. All it seems to be about is building wind farms right across rural Scotland. In the Deputy First Minister’s speech, there was hardly a mention of wind energy, yet he must be aware of the widespread public concern

about the development of wind farms. My colleague Ted Brocklebank tells me of a plan in north-east Fife to build on Clatto hill 17 wind turbines, each of them, at 93m, approximately the height of the statue of Liberty.

We know that there is a great deal of concern across the country. Last week, a group of 11 Perthshire ladies made a unique protest against what they regarded as over-scale wind farm developments in their area. They performed “The Full Monty” strip for the cameras. Now, it takes some courage to take one’s clothes off in Perthshire in April and I think that that shows the strength of feeling on this issue.

Mr Wallace: Murdo Fraser has just exposed the complete contradiction in his attack on the Executive. He said that we had no strategy other than to promote wind farms and then he criticised me for not referring to them. For the best part of 12 minutes, I described a strategy of renewables development that barely mentioned wind power. That just shows how wrong he is. We have a balanced strategy.

Murdo Fraser: We are always glad to hear from the Deputy First Minister about the new technologies, but I am surprised that he did not address what seems to be at the core of the Executive’s current strategy, which is to develop onshore wind power.

My criticism is not exclusively of the Executive. I listened with great interest to Roseanna Cunningham. It is extraordinary that the SNP is calling for an increase in targets that others are saying are likely to be unachievable. All that increasing targets will do is to increase pressure for more wind farms in rural areas. I cannot believe that Roseanna Cunningham’s constituents in rural Perthshire will welcome the prospect of yet more wind farm applications. The Executive is trying to meet its targets exclusively from onshore wind, and is using its planning policies to stamp on local opinion.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: In a second.

The deputy minister, who will be responding to the debate, is fond of quoting surveys at me that show that the public are generally in favour of wind power. I have no doubt that, if I were to walk down a residential street in Morningside and knock on the doors, I would find almost unanimous support for wind power. However, if I were to propose building a wind farm on the top of Arthur’s seat or the Braid hills, I could guarantee that that public opinion would shift overnight. It is all very easy for Labour members, in the main representing urban constituencies, to support the building of wind farms in rural Scotland—they do not have to

answer to their constituents for that. May I suggest that, before those Labour members become too enthusiastic about wind turbines, they speak to people living in rural communities?

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Speaking as a representative of Edinburgh—but not, I hasten to add, Morningside—I suggest to the member that, if he were doing such a survey, it would be an awful lot more useful to offer people the prospect of photovoltaic cells and mini-wind vanes, which represent a huge opportunity that we have not even begun to explore in Scotland. That is where Labour members are putting their energy in urban areas.

Murdo Fraser: If that means that the member will join me in opposing large-scale rural wind farm developments, I am delighted to hear it.

Sarah Boyack indicated disagreement.

Murdo Fraser: The member is shaking her head. Sadly for the Executive, its single-minded approach to developing onshore wind is already looking out of date. The tide is starting to turn against onshore wind development. Last month's report from the Royal Academy of Engineering was extremely sceptical about the benefits of wind power, making the case that wind generation is two and a half times more expensive than conventional generation. It is more expensive than nuclear energy, even if the cost of decommissioning is included. Tonight, the David Hume Institute is launching Professor David Simpson's paper, which is another contribution to the debate. It, too, argues that nuclear power is half the price of wind power and it maintains that the drive to establish onshore wind represents a stealth tax.

I know that there are economic benefits from wind generation and I would not rule it out completely. I have seen the jobs that have been created at Campbeltown and elsewhere. The sad fact is, however, that all the focus on onshore wind is leading to neglect of other renewables technologies. Like other members, I would like a greater focus on hydro power, on tide and wave power and on biomass. There are opportunities to develop those technologies if we tweak systems such as the renewables obligation certificates.

Even if the Executive meets its ambitious targets, there is now serious doubt about whether its programme is achievable without blanketing the entire countryside in wind turbines. We still have a black hole at the heart of the Executive's policy. Every existing conventional power station in Scotland is coming towards the end of its natural life. We should be planning now for the next generation of non-renewable power generation. That means power from gas, coal and nuclear. It is not often that I agree with Unison, but in its

briefing for the debate it made the excellent point that the Scottish Executive should be adopting a balanced energy strategy, which includes a mix of generating capacity. That would include a larger element of renewables, when proven capacity can be delivered, together with gas, coal and nuclear power. Unison is absolutely right.

The Executive's current strategy is seriously flawed. Unless it is prepared to consider the issues that I have highlighted, the lights will be going out across Scotland because of the lack of energy production. It is time for the Executive to work with the Westminster Government to produce a proper and sensible energy strategy for our future.

I move amendment S2M-1185.2, to leave out from "endorses" to end and insert:

"notes the increasing scepticism about the achievability of the Scottish Executive's targets for renewable energy from a number of sources, including former Energy Minister Brian Wilson MP and UNISON; further notes the publication of reports from the Royal Academy of Engineers and Professor David Simpson of the David Hume Institute on the costs of wind power generation as against other generation methods; regrets the current rush to develop onshore wind capacity to the exclusion of other technologies such as hydro, wave, tidal and biomass, and calls on the Scottish Executive and Her Majesty's Government to work together to develop an energy strategy for Scotland which will include a mix of generating capacity, with components from renewables, gas, coal and nuclear power."

15:29

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): We have a cavalier attitude towards our use of electricity and take notice only when the power supply fails. Even now, when most scientists accept the reality of climate change and are now talking about the timescale and the implications, neither the general public nor businesses are showing any real concern. Reducing our demand for electricity must be a top priority, with energy efficiency playing a huge part. The Energy Saving Trust has calculated that greater household efficiency could save 120 terawatt hours of energy and 8 million tonnes of carbon across the United Kingdom by 2010.

The Executive must set mandatory energy efficiency targets. Improved building standards for new-build homes and business properties are vital if we are to ensure that all new developments are at least as energy efficient as the best in the world. It is not easy to address energy efficiency in existing buildings, but much more can and must be done to prevent the massive wastage of electricity through poorly insulated buildings. Even in Scotland, it is possible to build homes and offices that require no heating.

We must understand that electricity makes up only 20 per cent of Scotland's energy use; the remainder of the energy is used by transport, industry and non-electrical heating. If that situation remained the same, even if 100 per cent of our electricity came from renewable sources, 80 per cent of our energy would still come primarily from dirty fossil fuels. Oil is not renewable. At present, we use four barrels of oil for each new barrel that is discovered. The economics of extraction cause concern, especially in Scotland, where economic oil extraction is expected to peak in 2010, which is just six years away. However, we do not have to wait until the oil runs out. To paraphrase Sheikh Yamani, the stone age ended not because we ran out of stone, but because we came up with something better. Let us not kid ourselves that nuclear power has anything to offer: it is a dirty, unsustainable and hideously uneconomic power source.

Should we wait for oil prices to rocket and thereby forfeit fuel security by looking abroad for our oil needs, or should we take action now to develop alternatives? Alternatives such as biofuel and hydrogen fuel cells are being developed by enterprising companies in Scotland. Do Scottish Enterprise and the Executive encourage and support those companies?

Phil Gallie: Does Shiona Baird accept that the nuclear generation industry is the safest electricity generation industry, both worldwide and in the UK? Does she accept that the industry does not emit noxious gases of any kind? Does she accept that nuclear is the most reliable power source that we have? She is always complaining about the cost of fuel for old folk, but they depend on the nuclear output at many critical times.

Shiona Baird: Phil Gallie asks three questions; my answers are no, no and no. Has he forgotten about Chernobyl? We are still suffering the effects of that disaster, which I think happened about 17 or 18 years ago.

Phil Gallie: What about the UK?

Shiona Baird: The effects of Chernobyl came across to the UK.

The Executive has the vision to look two decades ahead and it has set an ambitious target for renewable energy. Some doubt that that target is achievable, but it is achievable if the will exists. The target must be achieved if we are to have any chance of reversing the worst excesses of climate change.

Scotland has huge resources. The potential output from four tidal stream locations around Orkney could be 34.2TWh, which is around 8 per cent of current UK electrical generating capacity. To our shame, we have a long way to go before we can realise even a fraction of that enormous

potential. To date, only around 200MW of installed capacity has been built in Scotland, although the Executive estimates that there is the potential for 11.5 gigawatts of onshore wind capacity, which means that we have only scratched the surface of what is possible. Offshore, the potential is even greater.

What is the Executive doing to show its commitment to the environment through the economy? If we manufactured all the turbines that are required for onshore and, ultimately, offshore wind farms, that would provide a great benefit for the Scottish economy. We lost the initiative in the 1980s, when Howden of Glasgow was given no support, but we have not learned the lesson. The world's first wave-powered farm is being set up in Portugal. How can the Executive have allowed that to happen?

Lewis Macdonald: Does Ms Baird accept that the success of a Scottish renewables company in exporting its product to Portugal, which is one of our potential competitors, is a good sign of how far ahead we are in the area of technology concerned?

Shiona Baird: Both Portugal and Ireland have provided favourable market incentives, unlike us. While we have been sitting around talking, our European competitors have been getting on and making things happen. Portugal already has a grid connection in place in the Bay of Biscay; we do not even have grid capacity. My answer to Lewis Macdonald's point is that Portugal will soon want the economic benefit of building machines out there. The potential loss to the Scottish economy does not bear thinking about.

Ocean Power Delivery—the company that is behind the successful wave energy converter—demonstrates all that is best in a smart, successful business, and what does the Executive do? Not a lot and that is done too late. I ask members to support our amendment.

I move amendment S2M-1185.3, to leave out from “endorses” to end and insert:

“believes that the Scottish Executive can play a much more significant role in tackling climate change by encouraging reductions in energy use through greater energy efficiency and by achieving a greater shift in energy use from fossil fuels to renewable sources, whilst at the same time creating sustainable ‘green’ jobs; welcomes the targets set by the Executive for generation of 40% of electricity from renewable sources but notes that this amounts to only about 8% of Scotland's total energy use; recognises that a study commissioned by the Executive shows that the energy potential from renewable energy in Scotland is as much as 60 gigawatts and therefore that renewable energy has a massive potential to supply energy, not only for electricity but also for fuels; further recognises that Scotland leads the world in research and development of wave energy converters; is gravely concerned that the first order for wave converters has come from outside Scotland and that the potential for a

manufacturing industry for wave converters may be lost to Scotland because of insufficient market incentives, and therefore calls on the Executive to set concrete targets for energy efficiency, to publish an action plan, including targets, for renewable energy to supply non-electrical uses and to improve market-based incentives for emerging renewable energy technologies."

15:35

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):

The Executive's targets to increase electricity generation from renewable sources are ambitious but achievable, and we are making progress towards them by investing in and encouraging the renewable energy industry and some of the technologies to which Shiona Baird referred. The industry has huge potential not only for creating a Scotland of cleaner energy production, but for allowing us to reap the rewards of its development in economic benefit and job creation if we continue to provide the right support.

Of course, a wide-ranging debate will take place about the right mix of future energy production to ensure a secure supply and lower carbon emissions. As I am sure that we will hear from other members, an important role remains for more established electricity generation methods.

We have heard before in the chamber from those who are worried about reliance on wind power because they fear that its energy supply may be intermittent. I have heard during the Enterprise and Culture Committee's inquiry that our future mix of energy generation will be able to deal with intermittency. More concerning is the intermittent support from some Opposition parties for renewable energy developments. SNP and Tory MSPs give us warm words about how they want more renewable energy production, but they oppose specific wind farm proposals. The Tories even propose a national moratorium on wind farm developments. Such attitudes, which are based on political opportunism, will not secure progress on renewable energy.

Rob Gibson: Has the member asked Mr Iain Smith of the Liberal Democrats or Dr Elaine Murray of the Labour Party what their attitude was to two recent wind farm applications in their areas?

Richard Baker: I have not spoken to them about those proposals. I am talking about the Executive's strategy as a whole—that is what the motion refers to. What the SNP's amendment says about wind farm planning applications contradicts the SNP's overall strategy of having more ambitious renewable energy targets. The member must examine that contradiction.

The Executive's strategy is in contrast to the other parties' political opportunism, because it is based on encouraging the development of

experimental new technologies and supporting technologies that are in the marketplace. It does that successfully through the programme of renewables obligation certificates.

Making progress now on developing our renewable energy is not only an environmental imperative. It is not simply part of a green agenda, worthy as that might be; it is an economic imperative, too. Debates may take place over the aesthetics of wind farms, and planning processes should be sensitive to several factors, including the environmental impact of proposals. I am sure that Dr Murray would have referred to such matters. We hear often from a small but vocal group of people, regularly including the Tories, who oppose wind farms and specific developments.

When the Enterprise and Culture Committee visited Campbeltown, we heard about the extremely positive impact that the wind farm there is having on the local economy. It is providing vital jobs for local people in an area where they are greatly needed.

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): Mr Baker must be aware of the enormous economic benefit that nuclear facilities have provided to their communities not only in Scotland, but elsewhere in the United Kingdom. As a Labour member of the Executive, will he undertake that the Labour group will not allow the Liberal Democrats to determine energy policy and rule out nuclear power?

Richard Baker: I would not want the Labour group to be dictated to by anybody, and certainly not on such an issue. I am sure that John Home Robertson will refer to the matters that Mr Mundell mentioned. I am talking about the benefits of renewable energy and I want to make progress on describing what we can achieve with that.

We could bring great benefits to our economy by investing in developing renewable energy technologies. Tidal energy is a particularly exciting development because of its potential to provide a predictable energy supply. In particular, I want to refer to offshore technologies, which are not being neglected—they are being invested in. The Executive has recognised their potential in the funding that it has given to research projects, such as the £2 million that was given to the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, and the intermediary technology institute for energy in Aberdeen will help us to consider how we can diversify current skills and resources in the oil and gas sector into developing offshore renewables.

The Executive has also supported the development of offshore wind through a research grant for the plans to develop Europe's first deep offshore wind farm. Those plans propose to place some 200 turbines on existing platforms in the

Beatrice oilfield, and there is the potential to generate around half of the new generation that is needed to meet the Executive's 40 per cent target for 2020. In Scotland, we have some of the world's leading expertise in new technologies for marine and tidal energy, at universities such as the Robert Gordon University. That is no accident, but part of the Executive's strategy for funding research. I hope that that funding can be backed up by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council looking to fund more marine energy research in our universities, because, by capitalising on the development of such technology in Scotland, we can be Europe's leaders in the industry.

I was pleased to see that the forum for renewable energy development in Scotland has set up a marine energy sub-group, and that meetings are to take place with people who are developing the marine energy sector in Portugal, to which Murdo Fraser and others have referred. Indeed, we heard much about that matter during the committee's inquiry. We must ensure that we are in a position to capitalise on the expertise that we have in Scotland and ensure that the skills and infrastructure that have made Aberdeen the energy capital of Europe can be applied to successful new industry, with new ways of developing energy that will go beyond the lifespan of the oil and gas industry.

The minister has rightly stated that Scotland has the greatest marine energy potential in Europe and the Executive has welcomed reports that 35,000 jobs could be created throughout the United Kingdom in the renewable energy industry by 2020. Nearly 2,000 people are currently employed in the industry in Scotland. The committee's inquiry heard from the Scottish Renewables Forum that as many as 24,000 jobs could be created through marine and tidal energy production in Scotland alone by 2015.

That is why I am pleased that the Executive is investing in developing marine energy, which represents the great potential of the renewable energy industry as a whole, not only to improve our environment, but to benefit our economy and create jobs. It is also why I lament the timid support and confused strategies for developing renewable energy that are displayed in the Opposition amendments, why I applaud the Executive's bold strategy of developing renewable energy and why I support the Executive's motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Members have five minutes.

15:42

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): As Richard Baker said, the Enterprise and Culture Committee is conducting an inquiry into renewable

energy. I hope that I can touch on one or two issues without either pre-empting what the committee's report will say or straying from my neutrality as convener of the committee.

It is all too easy to concentrate on electricity generation or electricity consumption, as much of the debate has done, rather than on energy use as whole. Even in Scotland, I think that around 80 per cent of household energy is used on space heating and a substantial proportion of that space heating, of course, does not use electricity—other fuels, such as oil or gas, are used.

Some members of the Enterprise and Culture Committee recently paid a visit to Denmark and had the opportunity to visit a large power station on the outskirts of Copenhagen. Apart from seeing what electricity that power station produced, it was fascinating to see that the hot water that is produced as a by-product, if you like, was used in combined heat and power systems. I think that hot water was being pumped as far as 25km to 30km away from the power station to heat district power systems in various municipalities. In this country, where we have a fairly mature housing infrastructure, the back installation of large numbers of district heating systems would be an expensive operation, although that is clearly possible in new developments—I think that a member has already alluded to that.

The other fascinating aspect of the power station was the amount of co-firing that was used. The basic fuel was, or had been, natural gas, but it was fired along with straw and wood pellets. Local farmers brought in bales of straw, which were then piled in the warehouse to be fed into the boiler of the power station. Both straw and woodchips are sustainable and renewable fuels, as well as being CO₂ neutral. The use of woodchip pellets was particularly instructive. The pellets are, in effect, a previous waste product from furniture manufacture in Denmark. That is particularly relevant in the light of Scotland's substantial production of timber, which is due to reach a peak in the near future. The ability to use a fuel that is both renewable and locally obtainable must be a substantial attraction, which we should exploit.

Given what I said about the proportion of energy that we use for space heating, we must realise how attractive it is to use wood fuel in boilers, particularly in large buildings such as swimming pools, schools or hospitals. For every 100 tonnes of timber that we process, we produce 45 tonnes of sawdust, bark and woodchip, which do not have much of a market or sell at a high price, so the attraction of being able to use that material is high. The idea is particularly appealing in Scotland's rural areas, where we produce so much timber. We have all that fuel sitting on our doorstep and if we could use it, we would not have to bring in

tankers of liquid propane gas or whatever other fuel to use in our boilers.

When we visited the Vestas-Celtic Wind Technology plant at Campbeltown, I took the opportunity to drop into the swimming pool at Lochgilphead, which uses precisely that method. *[Laughter.]* Fortunately, it was only the boiler room of the swimming pool that I dropped into. It was fascinating to see the use of wood fuel at the swimming pool; virtually no ash was produced, the boiler ran seamlessly with little intervention and used fuel that was produced only a few miles away, and no pollution whatsoever was produced.

The problem with getting manufacturers to install such equipment is that they are far happier with the conventional, safe option. That is a particular problem in private-public partnership and private finance initiative schemes, in which the choice of method of firing the boilers is left to the contractor rather than to the local council. The Executive must encourage that kind of technology a bit more, perhaps by considering the use of capital grants, so that we can make it a more economic option. The benefits that wood fuel can deliver to the community, to the environment and to the local forest industry, which is often hard pressed because of international prices, are significant.

15:47

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I want very much to support the Executive's motion; to endorse the targets that it has set out; to support the progress that has been made so far, particularly in hydro and wind generation; to identify the importance of long-term development of new renewable technologies; and to ensure that energy efficiency is part of the process. The importance that the Parliament has attached to renewable energy will be one of our big achievements and is one of the things that will distinguish the establishment of this Parliament.

The renewable energy industry is good news for Scotland. It is good news for research and development in universities and companies. It is good news for manufacturing and jobs. It is very good news for social justice—one of the things that I would add to Jim Wallace's list of five objectives is that we should tackle fuel poverty and end the scandal of people in the 21st century living in homes that are unfit for them. Renewable energy has something to add in that regard. The industry is also good news for the environment, a subject to which I will return.

Renewables do not add to our climate-change problems, they do not create pollution and they do not create waste and security problems that last for many generations to come. For those good

reasons, we should think seriously about using renewables.

We have made progress, partly because we have made renewable energy a political priority across the chamber. I hope that we do not lose that in today's debate. Work has been done at ministerial level on the setting of targets, new research technology is being developed in Aberdeen and Orkney, as Richard Baker mentioned, and the new FREDS has been established.

However, we need to maintain overall political support. I accept absolutely that people do not have to sign up to every development regardless of their party, but we will take no lectures from the Tories on renewables. The suggestion that the current success in the development of wind power has been achieved at the exclusion of other types of renewables is ludicrous and totally wrong, and the facts do not bear it out. Let us not forget why the wave power approach was abandoned—it was because the Tories withdrew support for it. They were in charge for 18 years and research into wave power was abandoned at the precise point at which the Danes developed a world-class wind power industry. That is why Scotland is now playing catch-up and why we are way behind Denmark, Spain, Germany and Japan. We need to have ambitious targets and to give them political support.

It is vital that we have a range of different projects. For example, our new and refurbished hydro power systems will mean that we will meet the 18 per cent target for renewables by 2010. We also have a series of biomass projects; although we do not have enough of them, we know that the technology works and that it can provide good power. Moreover, across Scotland, many small-scale combined heat and power and solar projects are being developed with practical financial support from the Executive. Let us not pretend that such work is not being done.

There is a long distance between innovation and the mass application of some of the technologies and the Executive must focus its energies in that area. That is why the 40 per cent target is crucial. The target needs to be ambitious. After all, we need vision and big thinking if we are to lift off from our current position. On this occasion, the Executive is giving us that kind of thinking.

I say to the SNP and the Tories that that does not mean that we will never have to make difficult decisions. Indeed, we cannot avoid such decisions. Wave and tidal energy developments are not without their problems and will have potential environmental impacts. As a result, we need an appropriate planning and environmental impact assessment framework.

Roseanna Cunningham's speech was much more measured than those that we have heard in the past from the SNP. However, I must tell her that we have concise and coherent guidelines that make it clear that the issue of cumulative impact should be taken into account in every decision. I welcome Scottish Natural Heritage's work to assist that process, because it will result in better decisions and more information.

Local authorities have the democratic job of ensuring that their communities are fully involved in such decisions and are able to get into the detail of the projects. Central Government cannot resolve that critical issue. For example, although 17 wind vanes in an installation might be perfectly well located, the 18th might be in the wrong place. Such a situation will be resolved not by diktats from ministers in central Government, but by the power companies, RSPB Scotland, the local authorities and so on sitting down together and bashing things out. We need that range of decision making.

We must support the 40 per cent target, and some excellent work is being done in that regard. However, it is not enough simply to consider renewable energy; we must also think about the way in which we use energy and energy efficiency. In that respect, I was amazed to find myself agreeing with almost all of Alasdair Morgan's speech, which makes it clear that there is consensus across the chamber.

Having said that, I disagree with Alasdair Morgan on one point. There is no reason why PPP and long-term contracts cannot include provisions for energy efficiency and the use of renewables. Not including such provisions is a cop-out for companies and local authorities and the Scottish Executive should be making them key. Such contracts, with their 30-year life span, could capture aspects such as reducing carbon emissions and energy saving. Indeed, provisions on those aspects should be embedded in the contracts for every school and hospital project. I hope that the minister will tell us when he winds up how the Executive intends to deliver on that issue.

15:53

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I am afraid that I might be the one to break up the consensus in the chamber this afternoon. First, I declare my support for Murdo Fraser's amendment, which introduces to the debate on renewable energy and energy efficiency a new level of realism that is sadly lacking on the Government and SNP benches.

It is important to have this debate, because the value of renewable energy is being called into question not just in Scotland but worldwide. The benefits of wind farms are being called into

question even more and perhaps it is time for the Executive to acknowledge that thinking other than its own on this subject might be equally valid.

At its simplest, wind farming is a fine idea. As a source of energy, it means that we get something for nothing when the wind blows. However, when the wind does not blow we are left without an energy source, which means that we need a back-up source. As a result, we need to build two energy systems to support one unreliable system. Such a national approach is at best uneconomic and at worst the economics of Alice in Wonderland. The greater our dependence on wind energy, the greater the prospect of grid instability. In layman's terms, that means blackouts.

Alasdair Morgan: Will the member give way?

John Scott: I would rather not, because I have a lot to get on with.

Because of their high level of dependence on wind energy, countries such as Denmark and Éire already suffer from grid instability. We in Scotland should not be putting ourselves into the same situation simply because the Executive has not thought through the consequences of its intended actions. I am not being totally negative; after all, we cannot totally discount the benefits of renewables such as wind energy.

Mr Ruskell: Will the member give way?

John Scott: No.

We need to develop constant and predictable energy sources such as tidal power and biofuels. Other renewables such as solar energy and wave energy require the sun to shine or the wind to blow and they can only ever be bonuses. That is why it is self-evident that if we are going to strengthen the grid, we must not just serve the current rush to support wind farms. We must support the longer-term development of tidal power, which is one of the potentially dependable renewables; the others are not dependable.

If we must have wind farms, they should be located appropriately near the area in which tidal currents are most likely to be harvested. That is the only sensible way in which to strengthen the grid.

Sarah Boyack: Become obsessed with one type of renewable energy misses the point. Even with tidal power, there can be environmental impacts. Although tidal power is predictable, it is not constant so there still has to be a mix of sources. To rest on tidal energy would be a huge mistake for Scotland.

John Scott: If the member was listening to what I said, she will know that I did not say that we should do that. I said that wind energy is a bonus,

tidal energy is predictable and biofuels are entirely predictable.

We need a more joined-up approach from Government. Commentators such as John Campbell and the Royal Academy of Engineering are rightly demanding not just that we take a strategic approach to planning, but that we take a strategic and thought-through approach to delivering a secure energy supply. At the moment, we are getting neither from the UK Government or the Scottish Executive.

That is why the Conservatives have argued for some time that realistic and transparent decisions have to be taken now to secure our future electricity supply. That is why we have to develop a balanced mix of energy sources and why we cannot let our coal, gas and nuclear power stations run down. If the minister will not listen to us, perhaps he will listen to Unison, whose excellent briefing paper hit the nail on the head, and the former minister Allan Wilson, who has long taken a realistic approach to the question.

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): Has he been sacked then?

John Scott: I beg your pardon. I meant Brian Wilson. I thank the member for the correction, although I suspect that Allan Wilson's sympathies go in that direction as well.

No major economic country in Europe—by that I mean France, Germany and Spain—depends or has plans to depend on renewables to the extent that we aim to do in Scotland. Once again, the Scottish Executive is out of step with commonsense thinking elsewhere in the world. That is why I said in Parliament on 11 February that we have to start replacing our coal-fired and gas-fired plants now. We must replace nuclear with nuclear, coal with coal, and gas with gas if we want to remain a net exporter of electricity. Renewable energy sources will be a welcome bonus, but only that.

The First Minister will not want to be remembered only for his kilt sense or for avoiding taking the necessary decisions to secure our future energy supplies. He must make the commonsense decisions now. That is why I urge Parliament to support the Conservative amendment today.

15:58

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): It is true to say that we must pay heed to the base-load, but I am not persuaded in any way by the nuclear lobby that its solution is the only solution. Its solution has all sorts of long-term implications, not least of which are the accidents that have already occurred. The impact of those accidents still

lingers in Scotland today, in the lambs that cannot come to market from the southern uplands because of Chernobyl. As a result of that accident, it will be many years before we can bring future generations of lambs to market.

However, we have to address the problems with the base-load. A decision will soon have to be reached about what we are going to do with Longannet and Cockenzie. Those decisions cannot be put off much longer, because if we are to continue down the route of having a mix of power sources that includes fossil fuels, particularly coal, significant investments will be required to bring them up to the standard that will deliver reasonably clean power. We have to do that and Longannet—if not Cockenzie—has to be able to deliver reasonably clean energy. The route to that is through coal firing.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Given that the motivation for the debate and our action on renewable energy is the long-term impact of the burning of fossil fuels, does Mr Adam accept that nuclear is not the only technology that leaves us with a long-term waste problem?

Brian Adam: Let me develop my point on the use of fossil fuels. We need to have co-firing and schemes are in place to encourage it. Indeed, it is to the Executive's credit that it has recently improved such schemes. However, perhaps we need to think much bigger. We need a significant base-load provision, not all of which should come from gas. We should consider not only using straw or its by-products but, what is perhaps more controversial, addressing our waste problems in the same way that we address the by-products of our timber industry. We are increasing the mix of available renewables, but the pace at which that is happening is disappointing.

We need to give clear signals that we want to broaden the base of renewable energy. There is a perception out there—real or otherwise—that renewable energy means wind, wind and more wind. I do not object to the principle of wind power, but it seems to be the main route for the Executive's delivery of its aspirational targets. The SNP has been criticised for having even more ambitious targets, but there is nothing wrong in aiming at high targets. The issue is how we get there and how we encourage changes in the energy industry.

I want to talk about the fuel-cell contribution that we could see. Fuel cells exist now; there are practical applications now and they are available now. Part of the fuel-cell industry's problem is that it cannot grow the market fast enough to get the unit cost down. It is not looking for direct subsidies for the companies themselves. Rather, the industry wants those who are procuring new equipment as part of the major investment in

public services to be given subsidies to encourage that type of development. However, the PPP approach discourages that. We must consider how we can deliver sustainable energy requirements through public procurement, and one way of doing that is to write it into a contract. If we wish to encourage diversity in fuel sources, we should make available options such as pilot schemes, and subsidies should go to such schemes rather than directly to companies. That is what the fuel-cell industry is telling me.

I recently visited a fuel-cell company in my constituency—siGEN Ltd—that is doing exciting work, some of which is small scale. For example, the company is considering taking some of the heavy batteries out of motorised wheelchairs and replacing them with hydrogen technology.

We have the possibility of linking several of the available new technologies, but we need encouragement for that. I commend the SNP amendment to the Parliament.

16:03

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): I welcome the debate, especially as the David Hume Institute has come out this week in support of expanding the nuclear power industry in Britain. I condemn its short-sighted report and view and I have questions about who funded its research.

The Executive must hold the line and approve as many renewables projects as possible, although doing so sometimes involves difficult decisions. If the Executive does not forge ahead with more approvals, we will soon face the ominous threat of new-build nuclear facilities in this country. It is frustrating that all those who object to wind farms are, in effect, foot soldiers for the nuclear lobby. It is important that wind farm developers address people's valid concerns in order to minimise the impact of wind farm schemes, but we must recognise that the majority of objectors to wind farm schemes—who are usually also the most vocal—do not live or work in the locality, or really understand how a scheme will fit into the landscape. The objections are often ill informed and reflect an exaggerated perception of what the wind farm will actually be like; indeed, I believe that many objections are based on dislike of change and a wish to preserve the countryside in aspic, rather than have it as a place where real people live and make their livings.

Wind farms, incidentally, are not the only victims of that type of attitude. I cite as examples in my constituency two hydro scheme proposals—which I have supported over the years—one of which extended for a period of some 12 years. One proposal was for a kilometre-long dam; it would be

about half the length of the Royal Mile and about as high as the spires above this building. The other proposal was for a weir that would be 2.5m high—about as high as the height of the head of the Presiding Officer in his chair. One was to be built in a special protection area and the other was to be built in a national scenic area.

One of the proposals has been turned down, while the other recently took another step towards approval. Which one do members think was turned down? The answer is that it was the smaller scheme, because it faced a concerted and highly organised campaign from objectors, many of whom were from outwith the area. The other proposal, which is considerably larger, has faced almost no opposition, despite its size. Of course, all schemes should be assessed on their merits, but I am concerned that, in the application that was refused, the Executive decision has been influenced by the force of the campaign against the smaller proposal.

My view is that both projects were worthy of approval. The Executive must be aware that groups and objectors are, increasingly, able to mount what appear to be huge public campaigns. The reality is that often the silent majority in the communities actually support renewable energy schemes and we must not let that silent majority be drowned out by the vocal minority.

We have heard several members mention the fact that Scotland has a wonderful natural resource and the possibility of our becoming the world leader in renewable energy. We have wind, wave and tidal energy in abundance, so let us grasp the opportunity now for the benefit of generations to come.

16:08

Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab): I start by saying that I support the Executive motion in full. No one seriously doubts the need for renewable energy or the economic potential that it represents through fabrication, for example at the Kvaerner yard in Methil, and through technology development. The Executive, the minister and their counterparts down south have done well in setting a severe target—but about which I am not sceptical—which will encourage the industry in Scotland.

Although we welcome almost unreservedly the drive to generate as much energy as possible from renewables, it is not an either/or case, as the Tory motion suggests. It is important that we do not forget about our remaining energy needs, which must be generated by more conventional methods. In the interests of taking the debate forward, I want to talk about the potential for achieving our climate-change targets through

changes to conventional generation methods as well as through the use of renewables. That means that we cannot discount the nuclear option out of hand, nor can we risk our energy future by relying on foreign gas supplies from less stable parts of the world. We need as wide a mix as possible, so that if there is a problem with one type of energy we can transfer demand to an alternative source. If that is locally derived, so much the better. I agree with what Alasdair Morgan said about the evidence that we saw in Denmark.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): Does Christine May accept that, until some solution is found to the problem of what we do with nuclear waste, there is nothing to be gained from developing further nuclear energy in Scotland?

Christine May: I understand that work is currently under way to consider a long-term solution for nuclear waste. Of course, Rhona Brankin is quite right.

Coal has, for some reason, received a good deal less attention than the nuclear option. It has been almost totally removed from our plans, to be replaced by the aforementioned gas—

Mr Home Robertson: The Tories did that.

Christine May: That is true.

I accept that it is neither desirable nor acceptable to burn vast quantities of coal in the way that we have always done, but that should not blind us to the possibilities that coal presents, such as co-firing—as we saw in Denmark—and cleaner coal technology. Technologies such as carbon dioxide sequestration and the gasification of underground coal are under development and could significantly increase the efficiency of, and dramatically reduce carbon emissions from, coal generation. As the motion suggests, we cannot achieve our carbon reduction targets just by renewable energy generation; we need also to increase efficiency and reduce wastage. Why should not we improve our conventional generating capacities in parallel with the development of renewables as a means of reducing carbon emissions? I can see folk shaking their heads at the thought of using coal, despite the 1,500 direct jobs and 1,500 indirect jobs that the coal industry in Scotland supports—not to mention the facts that coal is cheap, local and part of our heritage. I do not advocate exclusive coal generation; rather, I simply reinforce the fact that we need a broad mix of generating methods.

Biomass is one of the few renewable sources that can feasibly support base-load. Co-firing, coupled with grants, is the only way to kick start it as a viable industry. I admire what the Executive has done through FREDs—which has a sub-group that considers biomass—and its investment

in the industry. I welcome the Deputy First Minister's reply to my earlier intervention and I hope that when the FREDs biomass group reports, there will be an opportunity for a discussion about it in this forum. The discrepancy between the support that is available south of the border and the support that is available in Scotland makes us uncompetitive.

Finally, I want to say a word to the whingers who complain that Scotland is becoming a generation ground for the rest of Europe: God forbid that we should actually export anything. I can think of few better long-term economic strategies than one in which the rest of Europe depends on us for clean and reliable energy. We have the resources—let us make some money from them.

16:12

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): Scotland has achieved a reduction of only 4.9 per cent in emissions of greenhouse gases since 1990, but climate-change emissions from the energy sector increased by 27 per cent between 1990 and 2000. That poor record on energy undermines the Executive's motion.

We must recognise that the Executive can and must do more to improve energy efficiency, to increase electricity generation from renewable sources and to address the potential for green job creation. The Executive must consider how our homes and businesses are built and run. We cannot continue with our present levels of energy inefficiency, which cost money and damage the environment. Renewable energy must be integrated in all buildings at the earliest stages: all new build must incorporate features such as solar panels, and insulation must be fitted as standard. We could do worse than learn from the Scandinavian countries, where energy emissions from domestic buildings are minimal and the figures for winter deaths among the elderly are approximately half those of Scotland.

The development of renewable energy provides a great opportunity to create jobs in Scotland, but that potential cannot and will not be achieved without sustained investment and political commitment from the Executive. WWF Scotland recently published a report entitled, "A Smart, Successful, Sustainable Scotland", which estimated that more than 24,000 jobs could be created through investment in wave power and solar water heating. A report by Garrad Hassan & Partners Ltd, which the Executive commissioned in 2001, estimated that Scotland could generate more than its total electricity use from renewable sources. Where is that political commitment today, given that the first order for wave converters is being placed outside Scotland?

At present, the national grid is not capable of sustaining any great increases in electricity generation. The infrastructure requires considerable investment to increase capacity. That is particularly necessary to ensure that rural communities can benefit from renewable energy developments. The grid in South Ayrshire and in Galloway needs to be upgraded to accommodate additional generation. The Executive should move to take not only the grid, but the electricity generating companies, into public ownership. Renewable energy is a resource that is provided by nature and it should be generated and managed in a publicly owned and publicly accountable manner.

The Scottish Socialist Party is committed to the environment and to the generation of clean, green and affordable energy for all—in other words, to green energy from renewable sources, not from nuclear power. We call on the Executive to recognise that its lack of investment, lack of energy efficiency targets and lack of political commitment has failed the Scottish people and the Scottish environment on this matter. I urge members to take electricity generation into public ownership and I add that we will support the Green motion.

16:16

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): About 20 years ago, I received a letter from a household in my constituency of East Lothian in which serious concerns were expressed about nuclear safety. I was asked to oppose the construction of Torness nuclear power station. That was a perfectly legitimate position to take.

A few years later, I received another letter from the same house protesting about emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants from the coal-burning power station at Cockenzie and calling for that station to be closed. Again, I understand that position. The story gets more interesting because, when plans were published for the wind farm on Soutra hill, the same family wrote to object to unsightly wind turbines on their skyline.

It is fair to assume that the people who wrote those letters use electric lights, a kettle, a fridge and perhaps even a television or a computer. Like most people, they want reliable and affordable electricity but—also like some other people—they are unwilling to tolerate any means of generating that electricity.

Mr Ruskell rose—

Mr Home Robertson: Hold on—I will give way in a second.

My point is that we in Parliament do not have that luxury. We have a duty to plan to provide for the strategic needs of the people of Scotland.

Mr Ruskell: I understand the point about the member's constituent, but I am more puzzled about his own position. When he was elected in 1978, he was pro-nuclear but, in 1986, when he addressed a "stop Torness" rally, he was anti-nuclear. Last year, he was again making pro-nuclear comments in Parliament. When is Mr Home Robertson going to become anti-nuclear again? If he does that, he might be able to sit more comfortably with the rest of his colleagues in the Labour Party.

Mr Home Robertson: I had thought that the member was going to make a sensible point. If he wants a seminar on the difficulties that we experienced with the construction of Torness power station and the failure of the South of Scotland Electricity Board to employ local labour, I can tell him all about that, but he will find that I have been consistently in favour of that power station.

The Executive has set an extremely ambitious target of 40 per cent of generation from renewables. Although I support that policy strongly, it must be said that the 40 per cent objective will be phenomenally difficult to achieve; even if it is achieved, generation from renewables plant will depend on unpredictable wind, waves and rainfall. Renewables will be a valuable supplement to our base-load generating capacity but, even if we achieve the 40 per cent target, that will still leave a need for 60 per cent of generation—plus a margin for safety—to come from other sources. Parliament needs to face up to the fact that more than half of our existing generating capacity will reach the end of its design life during the next decade.

The lead time for planning and building new power stations can be 10 years or more, so it is imperative that the UK energy department and our planning department begin the process of planning for new base-load generators now. If we fail to do that, we will sacrifice a lot of Scottish jobs in areas such as East Lothian and Ayrshire and we will create a dangerous situation of higher electricity costs; indeed, over the past six months, we have seen a surge in the wholesale price of electricity. We will also create the serious risk of the sort of blackouts that have occurred in places such as Italy and California.

I have a major constituency interest in electricity. About a third of Scotland's electricity comes from Torness and Cockenzie power stations, which employ about 1,000 people in East Lothian. As Christine May said, exports of electricity through the UK grid are extremely important to the Scottish economy. Those exports would be put in jeopardy

if we were to fail to start the process of planning to replace the plants that will have to be decommissioned at Chapelcross, Hunterston B, Cnockenzie and Longannet.

I urge the Executive and Parliament to face up to their responsibility in this respect—it will not go away. We have a duty to the people of Scotland to plan for future strategic energy needs. The motion on renewable energy addresses a valuable, but inherently limited, part of the issue. The fact remains that we will continue to need new base-load stations. If we are serious about reducing carbon emissions, that must mean new nuclear plant.

The 12th conclusion in Professor Simpson's paper, which John Farquhar Munro dismissed but which was published by the David Hume Institute, states:

"Nuclear power avoids extra network costs, emits no greenhouse gases and, as a baseload generator, contributes to security of supply."

Of course, Professor Simpson is right, which is why we must begin the process of planning new nuclear plants and why we must do so sooner rather than later.

I was at Torness last Sunday to see the arrival of the decommissioned Concorde airliner, as it made its way to the Museum of Flight. There is a worrying comparison to be drawn between the decommissioning of a fabulous piece of British aviation engineering and the risk that we could lose our world-leading nuclear industry. Torness is a clean, safe and efficient electricity generator. I urge colleagues in Parliament and at Westminster to begin the next generation of nuclear base-load stations and develop more renewable capacity. We have a duty to do that: we need to maintain security of supply, to avoid a genuine risk of blackouts, to keep jobs in Scotland and—above all—to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

With regrets to the two members whom I do not have time to call, we must move on to closing speeches.

16:22

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):

The amendment in Shiona Baird's name calls for three things:

"concrete targets for energy efficiency ... an action plan ... for renewable"

non-electrical energy, and an improvement in

"market-based incentives for emerging renewable energy technologies."

From the debate that we have had this afternoon, I believe that there is considerable consensus that

all three things are vital for Scotland and for our economy.

As we have heard, emissions from the energy sector in Scotland rose by 27 per cent between 1990 and 2000. We know that CO₂ emissions increased by 0.6 per cent between 1990 and 2001. We know that North sea gas production is running down and that peak oil production is either running down already or will imminently run down.

A Government report that was published this morning tells us that more than 170,000 Scottish households have been identified as being at risk of flooding resulting from the effects of climate change. It is also the case that, by 2080, the costs of flooding in Scotland will be up to £400 million per annum at current prices. We have to act on that information and we have to do so now.

The Executive seems frequently to talk about energy when it means electricity. We hear much about renewable energy and renewable energy targets when all that we have are renewable electricity targets. We have no targets and no action plan for reducing transport energy demands or for encouraging renewables in transport. We have no targets and no action plan for non-electricity renewables such as biomass, combined heat and power, solar heating, passive heating or geothermal—there is nothing at all. That has to be rectified. I think that there exists within the Executive the will to examine the issue. I hope that it can be translated into action.

We need increased funds for the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative, which has been one of the star successes of the Executive's renewables scheme, and which we very much support. Increased funds for energy efficiency are vital. There was an exchange on the matter at the Enterprise and Culture Committee in October last year, when we were examining the budget. It became apparent that the energy efficiency budget has been increased this year from £6 million to, I think, £10 million, purely as a result of an underspend in the renewables obligation (Scotland) budget.

The Executive civil servant Chris McCrone said in evidence to the committee:

"It is a one-off for this year; the allocation will return to its budgeted amount next year—unless there is an available saving from the SRO money next year."—[*Official Report, Enterprise and Culture Committee*, 7 October 2003; c 186.]

We need those funds to be guaranteed for next year—it is necessary that there be a continuous amount of funding for energy efficiency.

On energy efficiency, we should look around us. Parliament has been in Baden Powell House and the other buildings for nearly five years now. When were energy audits done? Why are televisions still left on every night, blaring out to empty rooms in

which the lights are left on? It is tremendous that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has now appointed an environmental manager for the new building. For the old buildings, however, that simply was not done. I hope that the environmental manager gets adequate funds to do the job.

Mr Wallace: Will Chris Ballance take the opportunity to welcome the £20 million fund for local authorities, health boards and Scottish Water, which I announced last month? It is a revolving fund and savings can be ploughed back into energy efficiency as well as helping to fund the front-line services that those authorities and boards are responsible for delivering.

Chris Ballance: I am happy to welcome that funding, but we need to go much further.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have one minute left.

Chris Ballance: The tranche of PFI/PPP contracts that have gone out through local authorities over the past five years represent a real loss of opportunity.

I turn to the Conservative amendment. Nuclear power has no future. I refer also to many Labour back benchers' speeches. Elaine Murray said that we need nuclear power because the visual intrusion of wind farms is unacceptable. That is like saying that radiation must be less dangerous than a wind turbine because we cannot see it. John Home Robertson said that he has been consistently pro-nuclear, but in 1986 he told a rally at Torness:

"I can tell you with complete confidence that if the Labour Party was in power today there would be no question of commissioning Torness now. The overwhelming majority of people in East Lothian and Berwickshire are very worried indeed about the possibility of an accident at the site and I share that concern."

I do not know when John Home Robertson lost his concern, but I do not think that the people of Scotland have lost their concern about the dangers of nuclear power. However, it is not just a matter of the dangers of nuclear power; it is about the economic case, as well. British Energy has had to be bailed out by the Government to the tune of £650 million. That bail-out has been questioned by the European Commission—it might be illegal.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please come to a close now.

Chris Ballance: The Government has had to take on at least £3.3 billion of liability for nuclear waste. Nuclear power has not proved itself to be economical. The David Hume Institute report has been written by people who are far too close to the nuclear industry.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You really must close now.

Chris Ballance: I conclude: the European Commission estimates that there are 500,000 to 800,000 potential jobs in renewables. If Scotland becomes a world leader in wave power, it could get into that tranche of jobs. We can succeed, but we must put more money into development, and we must consider in particular—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, Mr Ballance. You are finished; you cannot go on indefinitely.

16:29

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): We can take it as read that the profile of renewable energy in the Scottish Parliament is high because the resource and potential that we have in Scotland is huge.

We need to get down to the nitty-gritty. There is a lot of it—some is large scale and some is not. Targets are a useful tool, but we should not get too hung up on them. To date, targets have focused on electricity generation. The fact that electricity represents only a fifth of our total energy demand has been made. Perhaps it would be desirable for us to set targets on supplying from renewable sources a percentage of total energy demand.

Others have nailed the idea, which is expressed in the Tory amendment, that we are developing wind power to the exclusion of all other technologies. I do not think it is a fair comment either. Murdo Fraser was at the meeting of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish economy at lunch time when George Lyon, who probably has more wind farms in his constituency than does any other member, said that he does not hear concern from constituents who have wind farms in their area; he hears concern from constituents who have wind farms proposed for their area and once they are in place the concern dissipates. I agree that we need security of expectation. We must have confidence that favourable trading regimes will be maintained to ensure continuing investment in renewable energy.

There is increasing acknowledgement of the wider aspects of energy production and consumption, which is welcome. Several members have said that the Cinderella of energy efficiency is coming to the ball. Energy efficiency can make a significant contribution. Building standards have been improved and could be improved further. Other members have said that upgrading housing stock does a lot to tackle fuel poverty, which is an important issue.

Jeremy Purvis made a good point about how the public sector can help create the market to pull renewable energy development. I would welcome attention being paid to how we can fund social housing schemes, how housing associations' procurement can be adjusted and how we can build public buildings in ways that enable the use of photovoltaics and geothermal and biomass energy. Alasdair Morgan said everything that I wanted to say about wood fuel: there is enormous potential there that we should exploit more.

The use of domestic applications could be encouraged by small measures such as installing two-way meters every time electricity meters are renewed in a house. That would provide an incentive for a domestic user to consider ways of reducing their energy consumption, from which they would benefit financially.

I would like more to be done to encourage and develop direct benefit to communities that host renewable energy schemes. Some communities have been very effective, but throughout Scotland people have to start from scratch because they do not have access to information and advice or they do not know where to find it. There is a role for both local and central Government in that. I cannot help feeling that local government must make quite a bit of money from the rates for wind farm developments, some of which could be applied to providing advice and support to communities, perhaps through community associations, as a result of local authorities' negotiations with wind farm developers. That would provide a direct community benefit to which communities are entitled.

I endorse what Sarah Boyack said about the complementary roles of local and central Government in the planning system. Several members pointed out that we have robust guidance—it just needs to be used properly. Solar energy needs daylight, not sunshine, but I agree that we need a secure energy supply and we need a balanced mix.

As power stations come to the end of their life, there is an opportunity to make considered decisions about how they should be replaced. All technologies, including nuclear, have to be evaluated against each other. On nuclear, zero CO₂ emission has to be set against long-term radioactive waste creation. Nuclear energy is far from cheap and we have to bear in mind that putting a lot of eggs in one basket racks up the vulnerability of nuclear power stations.

Christine May touched on coal-fired generation. We have almost forgotten that modern generation can be much cleaner than the older technologies. There is the potential to address the problem of the disposal of sewage sludge. We are shutting down other ways of disposing of it. We do not

dump it at sea and we are being much more careful about how we are dumping it on land, so perhaps we can derive benefit from it as a fuel.

I endorse what Brian Adam said about fuel cell technology. That is another area in which very good work is being done in Scotland, especially in the north-east. Fuel cell technology can take the intermittency out of wind power. Tom Pederson of Vestas-Celtic Wind Technology pointed out to us at the lunch time meeting that wind power and hydro power—both of which are abundant in Scotland—can be balanced against each other to deliver security of supply.

John Home Robertson made it clear that we do not have the luxury of time to fiddle about on our power supply; however, I do not agree that nuclear power is an essential part of our future. If we spend what we would need to spend on a new nuclear power station on other technologies, we can deliver base-load without nuclear power. Nevertheless, he is correct to say that we need to get cracking.

16:35

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

This has been an interesting debate. At times, it has been polarised, but I am glad that the Executive chose to see it as an enterprise debate rather than an environment debate. The Conservative party's policy on renewable energy and the generation of electricity as a whole will always be based on the fact that we need to ensure that this country can continue to provide an affordable and adequate electricity supply to underpin a growing economy. There are members in this chamber who do not believe that growth in the economy is important—[*Interruption.*—]but for the vast majority of us, growth is so important that we cannot afford to take the radical risks with our electricity supply that John Farquhar Munro appears to be taking with his hearing aid.

It is extremely important that we realise that we are talking about the stability of our future. The Deputy First Minister said in his opening remarks that it is important that we look on renewable energy production as an opportunity for industry. It is not just an opportunity to expand into renewable energy technology: our energy policy underpins the whole of our economy. That is the point on which the Conservatives' decisions will always hinge.

When Jim Wallace went through the Executive's five main challenges, he said that he wants to reach the target of 40 per cent renewable energy by 2020. That is a worthy target for any Government to set and pursue, but I am convinced that it is unachievable. Yet, accepting that moving towards that target will benefit the industry, I am

prepared to accept that there is benefit to be had. He also said that it is important to develop a range of technologies. I could not agree more. The problem that we face at the moment is that the marketplace that has been set up for energy and the timescale that has been set dictate that a single technology will be pursued. That is why we have a crisis in much of Scotland over where wind farms will be sited.

Nora Radcliffe: Does Alex Johnstone agree that wind farms are not being produced to the exclusion of other technologies for any reason other than the fact that the other technologies are still at a developmental stage and are not quite ready to be delivered?

Alex Johnstone: Indeed, but the fact that the target has been set on the timescale that has been given means that only the mature or acceptable technologies that are available today can be used to produce the 40 per cent. That target represents the decision that it will be inland wind farms that will achieve that aim. The minister also said that we need to exploit our opportunities. I agree, but that is why we need a range of technologies. The target that has been set will not be achieved, but it will cause distortion in the industry.

I agree with members of the Green party and others who have made clear how important it is for us to reduce energy use wherever possible. Energy efficiency is something that we must all understand is part of the process. I am the first to admit that, too often when I speak on the subject, I do not mention energy efficiency. Should I ever do that again, members may be assured that I do understand its importance. The Conservatives will continue to support measures to encourage energy efficiency as they did when they were in government prior to 1997.

We must address climate change. Whether or not we recognise global warming as a threat, the fact is that we continue to pump huge amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Regardless of whether it is necessary to address it for the long-term future or the immediate future, we must address it as best we can, but given our earlier qualification that we must also encourage adequate supplies of electricity, we must be prepared to address reducing CO₂ emissions in stages. That is where Executive policies seem to miss the boat. They miss many opportunities.

Biomass has been the poor relation of renewable energy for some time. Systems must be put in place to exploit the large quantities of timber that, as Alasdair Morgan said, are currently unusable. Between 40 and 45 per cent of all cut timber is unusable as wood and is therefore suitable for use as a source of energy. We must have the opportunity to use that. It could be done through combined heat and power systems—

technology that Scottish and Southern Energy tells me should be encouraged further or the company will not invest in it further—or it could be done through manipulating the system for renewables obligation certificates to ensure that the production of combined fuel, which Scottish Coal is keen on doing through by-product timber, continues to be an option. Executive policies would appear to have discouraged the development of short-rotation coppicing in Scotland, so it is important to have the opportunity to use our surplus timber, especially when there is so much of it.

I cannot finish without returning to nuclear power. We heard an excellent speech from John Home Robertson. It was balanced and it contained a view that parallels the view that Conservatives have held for some time. If future electricity generation in Scotland is to be balanced, we must accept that nuclear power has a role. Unless we make decisions today that ensure that our nuclear capacity is replaced as plants are closed down, we will suffer power cuts in the longer term. Not only will those power cuts be inconvenient, they will undermine the economy of Scotland, reduce standards of living and leave us with a shrinking economy. We cannot afford to take that risk.

16:42

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Many members agree that renewable energy from diverse sources is the most important sector in the future development of energy in Scotland. However, others take a different view. Putting the two groups together makes for an interesting combination. The danger is that we will be misled into believing that the vision of windmills on hills will put people off renewable energy. I hope that the SNP's amendment will convince people that renewable energy is a good thing. The SNP believes that diverse sources of renewable energy are the way ahead. From the way in which the Government has gone about its programme, we can understand that wind farms are the easy part of renewable energy. That is why we have seen a rash of developments.

John Scott: Which system would the member favour to back up wind power, given that it needs a 60 or 80 per cent back-up?

Rob Gibson: The development of wave and tidal power—which has been long delayed by Tory Governments, by Labour Governments and by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's fiddling of the figures for Salter's ducks, which has been admitted—has been held up.

If we consider the British context, we see that a dependency on nuclear power is given a high priority, but we have to remember that Scotland still has almost 100 per cent overcapacity in

electricity production. The threat of blackouts, power cuts and so on is thrown up as a spectre—in the Scottish debate and in the wider debate.

Denmark set up an energy authority after the fuel crisis of 1973. If we had control of all energy in Scotland, we could have a similar overview and take a similarly comprehensive approach here. It is a pity that only renewables are under the direct control of the Scottish Executive.

We can encourage businesses, but the fact that we are fighting with one hand behind our back makes the situation more difficult than ever—especially given that WWF has suggested that 24,000 jobs could be created in renewables. That is a considerable prize in parts of the country that are job starved and in which there are low incomes. Those areas could be receiving much income at present.

People such as John Home Robertson and Brian Wilson on one side and Murdo Fraser and Alex Johnstone on the other have adopted the attitude that the nuclear option is clean. That argument has been put firmly in its place. Carbon emissions are not the only issue. If we measure the potential of offshore wave power against the costs of disposing of nuclear waste, we may find that offshore wind power is cheaper than many conventional forms of generation—and certainly cheaper than nuclear power. One problem that I have with the Unison briefing from which people who support nuclear power are so happy to quote is that it states:

“Renewable energy is actually more expensive than other forms of generation.”

That is not the case if we take into account the problem of emissions from coal-fired power stations and nuclear waste. If we are to take a balanced view, we could do with having an energy authority to make some of the arguments.

The Government has made an excellent start on energy efficiency and the SNP is very supportive of it. Today, I lodged a motion on an excellent discussion at a conference in Caithness last week on the use of timber in buildings. The conference not only favoured local use of local materials, but recognised that many aspects of modern building could reduce the costs of energy. As the Green party has suggested, we could produce houses that are so energy efficient that they do not need to be heated. We can develop such approaches—they are part of housing policy, which must be part of energy development policy. We must ensure that energy development policy pays its way. I hope that the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning will respond to that point. The conference on tomorrow's houses today showed how we can build our way towards using less energy.

Community involvement concerns me a great deal. Some of the attitude problems that exist in many parts of the countryside result from the fact that people do not feel that they have ownership of the means of production of energy. Because the large utilities are seen as the main producers, there is immediate hostility to developments. Part of the problem is that the Government has not been speedy enough in putting community-controlled and community-developed energy in place. Highlands and Islands Enterprise was paid by National Wind Power to get its community unit going, but it took about five years for the community in which I live to receive any benefit. That effort must be matched by Scottish Enterprise, so that people can get in at the ground floor—either by acquiring proper levels of community benefit through planning gain or by acquiring equity shares in developments onshore and offshore. We would like to hear more on that issue.

SNH and non-governmental organisations on the environment support the provision of guidelines for the development of all renewables. As our amendment indicates, the SNP also supports that. However, it seems that the Government does not believe that central guidelines for such developments are needed. That is a great lack. I am sorry that there has not yet been explicit agreement to put in place guidelines that tell people exactly how they should proceed in these matters.

We should encourage support for developments by giving local people control, producing local benefits and creating local heating systems. Such initiatives are not high tech—they are innovative ways in which an ambitious Government should move. Existing large housing schemes could benefit from local heating systems. I believe that 60 per cent of housing in Denmark benefits from such systems, because they have been developed since the 1930s. Where were we when those things were being done?

Fundamentally, we should be more ambitious and take a grip of this issue, in so far as that is possible under the devolved settlement. In the Scottish context, renewables should be the main part of our energy production. I hope that the Government will reflect that energy by taking a grip of the subject and by putting renewable energy to the fore of energy production in Scotland.

16:50

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Lewis Macdonald): The debate has highlighted the opportunities and challenges of renewable energy. It has also made it clear that our absolute commitment to maximise

renewable electricity generation in Scotland, and the opportunities for the economy that come from it, has wide support. I welcome the support that we have received from various members. However, it is clear that there are different views about how the increase in renewable electricity generation should be achieved. That is why the debate is important.

The areas of agreement are significant. All parties agree that we must support the development of a range of renewables technologies if we are to meet the ambitious targets that we have set. Everyone agrees that small-scale domestic and community projects can make a significant contribution. Such projects are the focus of our highly successful Scottish community and householder renewables initiative.

Mr Ruskell: On 16 March, I received a letter from Peter Peacock, who said that, under the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative, schools and local authorities that are involved in PPP contracts can apply for up to £100,000 in grant aid for renewable energy projects such as wood-burning heating systems, which have been mentioned. How will the Executive promote the existence of those grants to those who are involved in new PPP contracts in Scotland?

Lewis Macdonald: Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Energy Saving Trust are working hard to promote the availability of the grants, which are significant. The issue of PPP contracts was raised earlier. There is the potential to build into those contracts standards that relate to energy efficiency or the use of renewable sources. Clearly, applications must be considered on a case-by-case basis, but we would welcome developments that give local authorities that opportunity.

Some of the areas of disagreement must be addressed. It is entirely false to suggest that we are ignoring the contribution that technologies other than wind power can make. It is equally absurd to suggest that the main fault in our renewable energy strategy is that we permit too many applications to develop new wind power resources—and therefore to argue to limit the potential for development—while at the same time arguing that we should set higher targets for renewables.

John Scott: Given the accepted need to secure base-load by backing up wind power generation with a dependable energy source, does the minister favour coal, gas or nuclear?

Lewis Macdonald: We favour the use of as wide a range of renewable and associated technologies as possible.

Some of the questions that have been asked are about the use of biomass and coal. It was extraordinary to hear a Tory representative say that we needed to strengthen the British coal industry. Anyone who remembers the history of the Tories and the British coal industry will recognise the hypocrisy that that involved.

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): John Scott gave the minister a choice, but missed out hydrogen. We all want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Hydrogen is the one source that is totally sustainable and friendly to the environment.

Lewis Macdonald: I would be astonished if Jamie Stone did not take the opportunity to mention hydrogen. He is right on that point. Hydrogen is one of the technologies that FREDS—the forum for renewable energy development in Scotland—will consider later this year, to see how we can make progress.

Alex Johnstone *rose—*

Lewis Macdonald: I want to make progress.

We want to position Scotland as a renewables-friendly country. We must show that we are better placed than our competitors to attract developers and jobs in all the renewables technologies. We will fail to attract those who wish to develop the new technologies if we do not demonstrate that we are serious about renewable energy by supporting the existing commercial technologies of onshore and offshore wind power and hydro power.

Rhona Brankin: The minister will agree that wind farms can contribute hugely to Scotland's energy production, but does he agree that they should be built in the right places and that more than enough energy to provide for Scotland's needs can be delivered without building wind farms in areas of Scotland that are designated for their importance to Scotland's natural heritage?

Lewis Macdonald: It is certainly important to make the point that whether wind power, hydro power or any other energy-producing technology is involved, planning guidelines are in place to protect the environment and communities' interests, which will result in inappropriate and inadequate applications being thrown out. That is a completely different proposition from the Conservatives' proposition that wind power onshore is bad per se yet some of the other renewable technologies that have not been developed to the commercial stage are per se without fault, defect or concern.

Roseanna Cunningham suggested that the planning guidelines that apply to wind power developments that local councils consider do not apply to larger developments that the Executive considers under the Electricity Act 1989. That is

not the case. Every authority that considers a planning or consent application, including ministers, must take those planning guidelines into account. The guidelines cover not only the environmental matters that Rhona Brankin mentioned, but the cumulative impact of a series of developments in the same location.

Roseanna Cunningham: I have heard the minister make similar statements before. If he thinks that his position is correct, how does he explain the demand for national guidelines not only from members, but from organisations as diverse as developers and Friends of the Earth?

Lewis Macdonald: We want to encourage the development of renewable energy. We will not do that by drawing a red line around great sections of the country and saying that renewable energy shall not happen in those areas. That would send completely the wrong signal to developers and to communities and would fail to deliver on the targets that we have set.

If a planning issue exists, it concerns ensuring that planning guidelines are up to date, that they reflect our objectives and that they achieve the balanced judgments that have been described. I am delighted to report that the United Kingdom Government is reviewing planning guidance on renewable energy south of the border, with a view to bringing it more into line with what we have had in the past two or three years in Scotland.

We have a planning policy that supports our energy policy—that is the way it should be. Significant community benefit issues under planning policy have been raised. We look forward to seeing Highlands and Islands Enterprise's conclusions on its proposals and we have undertaken to consider how to apply the same principles in lowland Scotland once the Highlands and Islands proposals have been made.

In his opening remarks, Murdo Fraser suggested that our energy strategy relies on wind power alone and that we are reluctant to talk about wind power. He was wrong in both respects. We are happy at any time to make the case for wind power as a key part of our energy strategy. It is key not only in its own right, but because it opens the door to new technologies.

Alex Johnstone suggested that the timescale means that we can use only wind and hydro power to reach our targets. The targets for 2010 will rely on existing technologies—wind and hydro—but by setting for 2020 a target that is more than twice as high, we are stimulating the development of the other technologies that we need.

That is why FREDs is doing such valuable work. It will report in May on what needs to be done to stimulate wave and tide power. I reassure Shiona Baird and others that Richard Yemm of Ocean

Power Delivery is chairing the FREDs marine energy group. That is the level of his commitment to Scotland and to remaining in Scotland, which we very much welcome. The sub-group on biomass energy is examining what needs to be done to encourage the use of wood fuel for electricity and heat.

Shiona Baird: Will the minister take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The minister is in his last minute.

Lewis Macdonald: I cannot take another intervention.

The point that I made reflects some of the concerns and questions that have been raised. We recognise that issues beyond electricity generation exist. Biomass has the potential to address some matters such as space heating.

Christine May and others asked about the fossil fuel base-load. It is worth remembering that we have approved not only more than 400MW of renewable energy in the past 18 months, but a 400MW gas-firing station, part of which will run on coal firing with renewable sources. A good deal is being done to address the security-of-supply issues that have been mentioned.

Social justice has of course been mentioned. Scotland now has the highest thermal insulation standards in the UK. We have cut the number of homes with the lowest energy efficiency rating and we are working hard with the Department of Trade and Industry in considering, for example, two-way metering to enable the connection of renewables production to the grid.

In response to the threat of climate change, which has rightly been highlighted as underlying the debate, we are taking a range of actions that will bring environmental benefits. Those actions will also bring Scotland economic opportunities for business and for jobs. We have a real world lead in many new technologies in the renewable energy sector and we should continue to support them. In order to do so, we should continue to make the most of the existing renewables technologies to which we have access in Scotland.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid):

There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-1184.1, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1184, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on mental health, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 54, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S2M-1184.2, in the name of David Davidson, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1184, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on mental health, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)

Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 54, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S2M-1184.3, in the name of Carolyn Leckie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1184, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on mental health, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)

Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 39, Against 77, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-1184, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on mental health, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament acknowledges, in National Depression Week, the Scottish Executive's commitment, reflected in the Partnership Agreement, to maintain the mental well-being of the people of Scotland and to improve the situation of those with mental health problems; notes that National Depression Week aims to raise awareness of the realities of depression and to reduce the stigma associated with it; commends the work of the National

Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being and progress towards implementation of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003; welcomes specific initiatives in relation to workforce development and service re-design, such as the Doing Well by People with Depression projects, but also urges the Executive to continue to support efforts to reduce suicides through the "Choose Life" strategy, to remove stigma and to increase the range and quality of services available to those with mental health problems.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that amendment S2M-1185.1, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1185, in the name of Jim Wallace, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)

Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 39, Against 77, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that amendment S2M-1185.2, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1185, in the name of Jim Wallace, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 100, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The seventh question is, that amendment S2M-1185.3, in the name of Shiona Baird, which seeks to amend motion S2M-1185, in the name of Jim Wallace, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)

Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 40, Against 76, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The eighth and final question is, that motion S2M-1185, in the name of Jim Wallace, on renewable energy and energy efficiency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 87, Against 22, Abstentions 7.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's targets to generate increasing amounts of electricity from renewable sources; notes that Scottish ministers have, in the last two years, approved 600 megawatts of wind farms and 7 megawatts of hydro power schemes and that Scottish local authorities in the same period have consented to approximately 170 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity; acknowledges the contribution of the Scottish Community and Householder Renewables Initiative in encouraging renewable energy capacity building for communities; acknowledges the long-term potential for

the development of renewable energy technologies, including the associated economic benefits and rural regeneration and export opportunities; welcomes the associated drive to increase energy efficiency measures across Scotland, including the recent announcement of the public sector energy efficiency fund and the environmental best practice being promoted by the Scottish Energy Efficiency Office; also recognises the contribution that both renewable energy and energy efficiency make to reducing carbon emissions, and supports the Executive's commitment to tackling climate change.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-1076, in the name of Tricia Marwick, on multiple sclerosis awareness week. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament pays tribute to the work carried out by the Multiple Sclerosis Society in helping thousands of people with multiple sclerosis across Scotland; welcomes MS Awareness Week, 18 to 25 April 2004, as an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of a condition that affects over 10,000 people in Scotland; recognises that there remain serious shortcomings in treatment and support for multiple sclerosis in Scotland, and believes that the Scottish Executive should develop a national standard of care for people with multiple sclerosis to ensure that levels of treatment and support are the same regardless of where in Scotland they live.

17:10

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): First, I want to acknowledge the very real commitment of MSPs from every party to the issue of MS and to people with the condition. Indeed, their commitment has been highlighted by the amount of work that has been done over the past four years to keep MS on the political agenda through asking parliamentary questions and so on.

The Parliament previously debated MS's effect on so many people in Scotland in October 2000. That was a poignant occasion because many MSPs either contributed to the debate or listened to speeches. In fact, it was the last occasion that our first First Minister, Donald Dewar, was in the chamber. Although he did not speak in the debate, he sat and listened to members' speeches.

Four years on, I welcome the opportunity presented by this debate to assess the improvements that have been made in the care for MS patients in Scotland. However, before concentrating on the advances—or lack of them—that have been made since the previous debate, I will give a brief explanation of the illness that we are discussing.

MS is a complex disease of the central nervous system that impairs the brain's ability to transmit instructions to the muscles. Although different people are affected in different ways, in most cases the symptoms become more severe over time. So far, there is no cure for the disease.

Scotland has the highest rate of MS in the world, with approximately 10,500 people suffering from the disease. No one knows why Scotland has such a high number of MS patients, but we do

know that the standard of care for people with MS remains unacceptably low. That was the case four years ago and remains the case today.

When we previously debated the issue, the Scottish needs assessment programme—or SNAP—had just published a report that stated that care for MS was

“substantially sub-optimal, inadequately resourced and unacceptably fragmented”.

At that time, I called on the Executive to introduce a national strategy and standard of care across Scotland to end the injustice of substandard care for people with MS. However, only ad hoc and piecemeal improvements have been made since then. We still lack a coherent and well-funded national strategy and, when it comes to treatment, Scottish MS patients still face a postcode lottery. The Executive's response to the problem has been many warm words but precious little action.

The October 2000 SNAP report recommended that managed clinical networks should be established across Scotland for those with MS. However, as no requirement was placed on health boards to adopt that recommendation, there is currently only one MCN in the country, and that was set up only through the commitment of individual specialists in Forth valley.

The varying standards of care mean that MS patients are still discriminated against depending on the part of the country in which they live. Four years ago, members highlighted the lack of specialist MS nurses in the national health service. Since then, there has been a welcome increase in the number of nurses from seven to 14. However, that is not enough: the Multiple Sclerosis Society Scotland has argued that at least double that number is required. Indeed, five health boards provide no specialist nursing for MS at all. Moreover, the increase in specialist nursing has been possible only because of the society's financial assistance.

Scotland's 44 neurologists recently wrote to the newspapers to profess their embarrassment at the quality of care for people with MS. For example, nine out of 10 neurology patients wait 266 days for an appointment. That is unacceptable. Despite the minister Malcolm Chisholm's acceptance that

“MS specialist nurses have enormous potential to improve patients' quality of life”,

the Executive has still failed to provide adequate funds for such nurses.

Finally, I want to touch on the area of research. Well-funded research is vital not simply to find a cure for MS but, in the meantime, to develop treatments to improve the standard of life for people with the disease. Again, the Executive has

failed to make any serious inroads into addressing the lack of research.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

Most of the member's speech and most of what we read about MS is about beta interferon, drugs, neurologists, specialist nurses and so on. Will she also confirm that, as I have discovered recently through a friend of mine, there are tremendous opportunities for help in the complementary medicine sector, and that we should not ignore that sector and concentrate just on very expensive drugs?

Tricia Marwick: Mary Scanlon makes a valid point, and the methods to which she refers should also be explored alongside the more traditional methods. Where those methods make improvements, they should be considered.

The current research is inadequate to tackle a disease that affects so many thousands of people throughout Scotland. It gives me no pleasure to be standing here lamenting the lack of progress since I last secured a members' business debate on MS. However, the criticisms are all valid and the time for warm words and assurances from the Executive is well and truly over. We need action now.

Mark Hazelwood, the director of MS Society Scotland, said today:

“The absence of a National Standard or framework for MS means that the condition gets low priority. Even the most basic services for people affected by MS are often absent ... The Scottish Executive should set a standard that spells out the basics which everyone ought to get, wherever they live. We're not asking for the moon. Such standards were published in England and Wales last year, but in Scotland, as yet, there is nothing, even though we have the highest rate of MS in the world.”

A national framework for standards of care is essential to end the geographical discrepancies in treatment. Such a framework must be matched by increased funding for staffing, equipment, care for those with MS and for research into the causes of MS and possible help for those with the disease. Then and only then will Scotland's 10,000 MS patients be able to achieve the standard of living that they deserve.

I hope that when he sums up at the end of the debate, the minister will give us not just warm words but a timescale for action to deal with the chronic lack of support and care for people in Scotland who have MS.

17:17

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): I congratulate Tricia Marwick on securing this important debate. During her recap of our previous consideration of the issue, she certainly brought to life in my mind

several memories of that debate and the many discussions that took place at that time. I take this opportunity to reiterate my support—and I know that it is shared by many in the chamber—for meeting the needs of those with MS and their families, and our support and admiration for the MS Society Scotland.

It is a bit invidious for an ex-health minister to single out any one organisation—that might do it more harm than good—but I believe that the MS Society is a good example of an effective health lobby group. It is not too cosy with the powers that be, nor does it simply beat the decision makers around the ears every day. It comes up with constructive but hard-hitting comments, criticisms and suggestions about how to make progress, and it deserves recognition for that.

The SNAP report that was published in 2000 has been referred to tonight, and it is mentioned in the MS Society's briefing. I was in St Andrew's House when that report was published and I acknowledge that there are huge issues around how we translate such reports into practice throughout the health service in Scotland. Anyone who has ever been in or near ministerial office, or involved in running the health service, knows that that is a big issue. I do not have time to go into it tonight, but the minister might address that issue in more general terms. I do not mind admitting that I am disappointed that implementation of the SNAP report, or the development of services in line with the shortcomings identified in that report, has not gone further, faster.

Standards can be improved in different ways throughout the country, but the key point is to ensure that they are indeed improved throughout the country. I do not want to prescribe to ministers how best to secure that levelling up, but I join the exhortation to level the standards. Much of what needs to improve in support for MS sufferers and their families does not need expensive investment. Much of it is about making practical changes in the delivery of services—for example, extending the MS specialist nurse service. I have seen at first hand the fantastic work that is done in the parts of Scotland in which the health service has got that service right. I understand the frustration of people who live in areas in which the health service is not getting it right. If there is a single message that we can send out from this debate, I hope that it is that the inequity of provision should not continue for too much longer.

I want to make a couple of further observations in the short time that I have available. First, one reason why the issue of MS has not been given the universal priority throughout the health service in Scotland that it perhaps deserves is because it is one of a number of chronic conditions that, sadly, often do not get the attention that other

acute conditions may get in the health debate and in the constant haggling for resources.

Secondly, I welcome the forthcoming launch of the Scottish neurological alliance. Members might be aware of that initiative from information that was sent to us. It is an incredibly valuable step forward that will bring together a range of organisations representing different conditions that have in common not only clinical aspects, but, crucially, the needs of the individuals who have those conditions. I welcome the development of the Scottish neurological alliance, which I hope will bear fruit.

17:22

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland)

(Con): I, too, congratulate Tricia Marwick on bringing this debate to the chamber and I echo Susan Deacon in congratulating the MS Society. I congratulate the society on its dedication and efficiency and on the fact that it is an open group that not only lobbies, but provides information about what it does.

Tricia Marwick indicated earlier what MS is about, but she said that she was not sure why Scotland has so much of the condition. The rate in England is around 160 per 100,000; in Scotland, it is almost 200 per 100,000. A genetic factor might be influential in the condition. People of Celtic and Scandinavian origin are particularly at risk. In my own north-east area, there is a high DNA base of Scandinavian and Celtic blood, which might be the reason for the high incidence and cluster of MS in Aberdeenshire, particularly its north-east corner.

The SNAP report was mentioned earlier. It is easy for SNAP reports to come out with a statement, but we must try to get from organisations such as the MS Society information on how they would answer the SNAP report. Such information could be put in the hands of MSPs and we could add our weight to any constructive arguments that would move ministers to listen a bit more carefully.

We know that there should be rapid referrals, but we have heard figures during the debate about how long it takes to get a referral and an assessment. Referrals should be made not only by neurologists, but by multidisciplinary teams, because all sorts of other factors come to bear when people have MS.

Recently, I visited the Stuart resource centre in Aberdeen, which is a day centre for MS sufferers. I encouraged the people whom I met to engage with MSPs in the north-east to ensure that the MSPs understand at first hand from the patients and their families how best to get across the information that MSPs should consider. They agreed to run an MSP panel session in May, which they want to be

as broad as possible. I hope that that local initiative will develop. The local Aberdeen branch of the MS Society is organising that session, but the society itself is obviously behind it.

The Stuart resource centre is a valuable resource to which Aberdeen City Council gives some support. The centre helps to give sufferers a sense of independence. It also organises events for them and shares information, and MS sufferers have access to various therapists there. Such services must be encouraged and rolled out across Scotland.

I mentioned clusters, which is where the postcode prescribing issue comes in if a health board has a large number of sufferers in its area. I ask the minister to explain clearly, so that we can understand better, the basis for allocations that ministers follow when they give money to health boards to support clusters of sufferers of any chronic condition, or whether it is merely left to the health boards to struggle and find their own way. Some time ago, I proposed top slicing for a specialist budget to which health boards could apply directly for extra help for specific clusters of conditions for which very expensive treatments were required, but that proposal was rejected. That was during the previous session, but I wonder whether the minister would care to comment on it.

Will the minister also say whether, to improve MS services, he has looked at the situation in Glasgow, where the health board has talked about deletion of or reduction in investment? Will he look into that situation closely to see what is happening elsewhere?

It seems that this is not a particularly sexy subject. The MS Society originally paid for 50 per cent of the funding for MS nurses over a three-year period, in the hope that health boards would take over the total funding, but that apparently has not been carried out across Scotland. I ask the minister again to look into that matter.

17:26

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): I congratulate Tricia Marwick on bringing the subject of MS before us yet again. She does not do so only during MS awareness week; she has an assiduous record of keeping MS in front of the Parliament. That is an extremely important point.

All of us who are present this evening are aware of the issues, either because they affect our own constituents or because we have seen the larger picture of what is happening in Scotland. We have to look at the matter both locally and nationally. Last month, I was invited for Sunday lunch by the Buckie and district support group in my constituency. Lunch started at 1 o'clock and

finished at 5 o'clock in the evening, because we were talking constantly. There were 50 to 60 people there—carers and those who were afflicted by MS—and they did not want speeches; they wanted me just to circulate round the tables, to chat to people and to listen to their problems.

It was interesting that, at every table that I went to, I received essentially the same story. People were frightened to speak out publicly in front of others, because—and I am not quite sure how to describe this—there was a sense that they did not really want other people to know too much about them as individuals. However, the point that I want to make to the minister is that I suspect that the general concerns that were expressed in Buckie are reflected throughout the nation of Scotland, and probably elsewhere too.

The first difficulty that was raised was that of access to neurologists. As Susan Deacon said, there is an opportunity to bring in other issues while we deal with the specifics of MS. As someone who works on the cross-party groups in the Parliament on epilepsy and on autistic spectrum disorder, I am conscious of the same arguments coming from those spheres. That issue must be addressed seriously. I do not expect the minister to be able to conjure up neurologists out of thin air, but nonetheless I think that it is an issue that we are all concerned about for a variety of reasons, including its impact on MS.

The other point that was drawn to my attention was that, post diagnosis, little support seemed to be given to the person who was afflicted or to their families and carers. David Davidson spoke about a north-east cluster. In the Grampian NHS Board area, for example, there is one trained MS nurse for 1,066 people. That is not a support mechanism. Given the geography of the area, that service really must be improved, and we have not really moved forward from the previous debate when, as Tricia Marwick said, we were given warm words.

It is important to recognise that the MS Society is undertaking a great deal of research. Professor Chris Linington is currently running a five-year project for the society. I understand that Professor Linington previously spent some time working in Germany and was appalled by the differences in treatment standards between the two countries.

JK Rowling has brought a great deal of attention to MS and we are grateful to her for her work. We must, as legislators, respond effectively.

17:30

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): As always, it is a pleasure to listen to Mrs Ewing in a debate in the Parliament and I also pay tribute to Tricia Marwick for again

securing time to debate this very important subject. I also welcome members of the MS Society Scotland who are in the public gallery.

I make a formal declaration of interest. Before I was elected, I advised the MS Society Scotland on communications and strategy and helped to develop its lobby of the Parliament four years ago and its work on the beta interferon campaign. I am no longer in that role; I have a different role in this Parliament, and I am pleased to say that there have been improvements in services. However, I greatly regret that those improvements have been slow and inadequate.

In the previous debate on MS, which Tricia Marwick secured and which took place at the time of the lobby, Malcolm Chisholm, who is now the Minister for Health and Community Care, said:

"I had not planned to speak in today's debate, but I was moved to do so because of the lobby, which is the most effective that I have seen in my eight years as an MP and now MSP."—[*Official Report*, 5 October 2000; Vol 8, c 1067.]

Malcolm Chisholm recognised—as other members have recognised through the more recent lobby—the absolute determination of people who live with MS to campaign for others with MS for a higher level of services that are better co-ordinated and a reduction in the barriers to accessing those services.

Regrettably, those barriers still exist and constituents who live with MS in the Borders and Midlothian still have problems. I will direct a few remarks at the situation in the Borders. The Borders must not be one of the underperforming areas in Scotland in terms of services to people with MS. Scotland has the highest incidence of the disease in the world, as we have heard, but there is still uncertainty about its causes. There is no uncertainty about the fact that the NHS is not providing the services in the Borders that it should provide. The NHS recognises that and the recent review of adult neurology services within Borders NHS Board makes recommendations for much-needed improvements in services for people with Parkinson's disease, MS and epilepsy, which will involve exactly the kind of co-ordination that we have talked about.

I am aware that the matter is complex, as are other colleagues who are in the chamber or who have taken a strong interest in the matter during the past few years. The introduction to the review comments that the population in the Borders is both small and widely dispersed and that the provision of specialist services in general and neurological services in particular is extremely problematic, particularly given that a wide range of the population is affected in different ways.

I think that all members are sensitive to the difficulty of ensuring that services are properly co-ordinated, but it is vital that the health board act urgently on the recommendations in the review. In particular, the recommendation for a specialist MS nurse in the area needs to be implemented now. I have met NHS Borders and the MS Society twice in the past two months to press for improvements and real progress in getting a specialist MS nurse for the area. I am pleased that the medical team has been tasked with implementing a number of the improvements that the review suggests. The appointment of a specialist nurse would make a major difference to people's lives. If I help in that process, it will be a great satisfaction in the years to come.

We should be in no doubt that the improvements that the health board implements will raise the standard of services only to match national standards, which are unfortunately still relatively below par. There is an opportunity for the services to be developed in a co-ordinated way in the Borders, with close co-operation between the health board and Scottish Borders Council, which should share experiences and planning; it is crucial that that happens in relation to occupational therapy. Coterminality and the single community health partnership in the Borders will make it easier to implement the review's conclusions.

I close with an appeal to the minister. Integrated services should be budgeted for and commissioned, services should be designed and delivered in co-operation with people with MS and there should be proper communication and co-ordination. Together, those measures will make a real improvement in the Borders; they could also become a national standard of care, which is vital.

17:35

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I, too, am happy to support the motion and to congratulate Tricia Marwick on securing the debate. I am also happy to welcome the opportunity that MS awareness week gives to improving public awareness and knowledge of a condition that affects many people in Scotland. I agree that, in many areas, treatment and facilities for patients leave a lot to be desired.

I have just checked up on the situation in Grampian, where there are four neurologists—who I presume deal with all neurological diseases—and, as Margaret Ewing said, one specialist MS nurse. In addition, there are close links with the department of rehabilitation medicine. Newly diagnosed patients are referred to the MS nurse and those who suffer a relapse go straight to a neurologist. When I received that information, I thought that the arrangements sounded

reasonable, until I found out about the add-on that the waiting time to see a neurologist is a year. I am sure that that situation is not uncommon. Members should remember that MS patients are just one cohort in the neurological spectrum.

We were all impressed by the many sufferers who turned up at the Hub last November to lobby us and explain their problems. It was clear that many of them had made long journeys and endured significant discomfort to meet us. They are to be congratulated on their endurance and determination.

As a result of meeting patients from the north-east on that occasion, I had the pleasure in January of visiting the Stuart resource centre in Aberdeen, which David Davidson mentioned. The establishment of the centre was made possible by a substantial legacy. As well as being a wonderful meeting place for MS sufferers, it is a well-used facility that was greatly appreciated by all the users whom I met on my visit. It is sad that such good fortune does not come the way of all patients.

I visited another support facility, in Dyce, Aberdeen, where massage, positive pressure treatment and other therapies are offered to users at a modest charge. There is another good resource in the city, which is provided by NHS Grampian, but unfortunately it caters only for people who are under 65 years of age. Users get most upset when they are told that they must suddenly stop their attendance on their 65th birthday. I hope to visit the facility next month to find out whether there is any possibility of its being able to accommodate older patients who have found it particularly beneficial. Those facilities make a huge difference to the lives of MS patients in Aberdeen; it is just a pity that they are not available everywhere.

The people whom I met furnished me with a wish list of what they consider to be bare necessities. It is only fair that I read out the points on the list so that the minister can take note of them and, I hope, consider at least some of them. The people whom I met want prescription charges to be free for people with MS. They want to have regular contact with a neurologist, which should include the opportunity to have a magnetic resonance imaging scan at regular intervals. They want all MS sufferers to be able to have beta interferon, if only for a trial period. They want more training for general practitioners and practice nurses and they want cannabis spray—when it is available—to be offered to those sufferers who feel that they need it. They also want age-appropriate respite care for people with MS and a national standard of care.

Many of the needs of MS sufferers that I have spelled out are common to a range of neurological

conditions. The message comes across loud and clear from all the groups that members meet that there is a significant lack of consultant neurological advice and that many more specialist nurses are needed. I wonder whether the lack of such nurses might eventually be addressed by the new GP contract, if GPs pull together and share specialist nurse services within primary care settings. A national standard of care of the kind that the motion requests is needed right across the neurological spectrum.

I hope that the minister will take on board the issues that Tricia Marwick's motion raises and that he will widen his consideration to include other neurological conditions that cause similar difficulties for those who suffer from them.

17:39

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands)

(Green): I thank Tricia Marwick for securing a debate in which I am pleased to take part. I will speak mainly from a Highlands and Islands perspective, partly because that is my area, but also because of the high incidence of MS there. Tricia Marwick pointed out that Scotland in general has a high incidence of MS and I should add that, as one goes further north, the incidence gets higher. I believe that Orkney and Shetland have the highest incidence in Scotland. That is not just a genetic curiosity; it leads to challenges in service delivery because, as one goes further north, one gets further away from the centres of population and the specialist centres.

In the lead-up to the debate, I did what I suspect many members did—I phoned my local informant. My local informant, who happens to be a party member—she is an office bearer in the local party—is a service user who is involved in the local branch of the MS Society. She told me about a service users' discussion group of which she was a member about five years ago that looked at services and how people felt about the level of service that they were getting. She told me that there were lots of grumbles at that stage, some of which have been partially addressed.

One of the issues that the group looked at was neurology appointments. Of course, not everybody in the Highlands lives in a remote or rural situation—there are centres of population such as Inverness, which has a large district general hospital. The hospital, however, has no neurology department. While my local informant was a member of the group, neurology provision amounted to a visiting neurologist who came from Aberdeen one day a month, I think. Since that time, provision has increased and more visits are made. That said, appointments are still quite hard to get. I have no idea what the waiting times are. I was unable to find out about that before today's

debate. Obviously, it is crucial to have neurology input, particularly at the time of diagnosis, but that can be quite hard to get.

My other point about the system of visits is that only the neurologist comes to do the clinics in Inverness. If the patients could attend a neurological department, they would have access not only to the neurologist, but to the other support staff in the department. I accept that it would be unreasonable to expect to have neurology departments in places where the population does not justify that provision, but I suggest that those issues have to be considered.

Other members have spoken about MS nurses. There is now an MS nurse in the Highlands, but she covers the whole of the Highlands and Islands area, which is larger than Belgium. Members can imagine that, although she is very much appreciated and liked, she does not have the capacity to make an input into individual patients' cases in any continuing way.

My local informant told me that physiotherapy is another big issue and that it has not improved over the piece. I understand that physiotherapy tends to be offered only at the time of diagnosis, when patients tend to get a burst of it, although there might be other short bursts if they have an episode of deterioration. My informant told me that people need to be given constant physiotherapy in order to prevent deterioration and to keep them as active and mobile as possible. That treatment is not available, because there is not the capacity in the NHS to provide that level of service.

Another issue that my informant raised was funding for MS therapy centres. A centre in Inverness offers different treatments and has a hyperbaric chamber. I know that some people are not too convinced of the benefits of that treatment, but patients feel that it offers relief. Although the centre also offers physiotherapy, people have to pay for it. I think that the charge is £7 a shot, which is quite a lot for someone who is on benefits. Counselling is also offered, which is an important service for some patients, as well as hairdressing, although, again, the full appointment costs have to be paid. I should say that the ratio of women to men with MS is 2:1. I presume that the reasons for that are similar to those that other members have mentioned.

Therapy centres offer a service that is not available otherwise, but they are strapped for cash. The centre in Inverness gets some health board funding but that has happened only relatively recently. It fundraises constantly—pretty much every day of the year—to keep up the services that it offers. I think that that is asking a lot of the people involved.

Mary Scanlon and Nanette Milne mentioned alternative therapies, which do not have to be high tech or expensive. Nanette Milne mentioned the possible therapeutic use of cannabis. Anecdotally, some patients who suffer from distressing muscle spasms, which is part of the condition, find that cannabis relieves those symptoms. It would be tragic if those patients were to be driven to contravene a law simply to get pain relief. The issue needs to be looked at as a matter of urgency.

Although funding issues are involved, other problems could be addressed through the provision of services that would not necessarily need to be hugely expensive. Physiotherapy does not cost an awful lot of money. To be honest, physiotherapists are not paid that much—not that I would want to justify that. We are talking about things that are not high tech and that should be made available. All that is needed is a bit of resource planning and management, some funding and a lot of political will. I hope that that will be found.

17:44

Murray Tosh (West of Scotland) (Con): I warmly congratulate Tricia Marwick on securing this very necessary debate. I should declare an interest of sorts, although it is of a non-material and non-financial nature. The elder of my younger sisters has MS; indeed, she is in an advanced stage of the condition. I say to Jeremy Purvis that she lives in the Borders. Paradoxically, although specialist housing could be provided for her, along with the expensive care package—albeit that that package works only because my mother, who is a full-time, unpaid provider of fallback care, is also the manager of the people who have been recruited to provide the care—the medical side of the package is erratic.

Jeremy Purvis spoke about the gaps in provision in the Borders. Many of us know about gaps in provision from our experience in our own areas. I recently attended the MS Society lobby in the Hub, at which I met a considerable number of constituents from the West of Scotland, who all had one message that they wanted to put across to their representatives. They were acutely aware that the level of service that was available to them in the Argyll and Clyde NHS Board area was not as good as the service provided by the Greater Glasgow NHS Board, which is itself not necessarily the best provider in Scotland.

I wrote a couple of letters on the matter to NHS Argyll and Clyde to press the board on issues such as physiotherapy and specialist nursing and I received constructive and sensible replies about the circumstances that the health board was in. The point was made to me that, if MS nursing was

provided, it might soak up resources that could be better deployed in recruiting nurses with a wider speciality, who could cope with people with other neurological conditions. I could not argue with that in principle—except for the fact that those people are not there either, because NHS Argyll and Clyde has a very substantial financial deficit.

I understand the principle of deficits and the need to bring expenditure into line, but I make the simple point that none of the people with MS in Argyll and Clyde or their carers is responsible for that deficit. They are not responsible for the financial allocations. They want an end to the postcode provision of what they see as desirable and essential services. Those services are desirable because people want them very much and they are essential because people know that the progression of the disease can be eased or slowed by the application of appropriate treatment.

The MS sufferers know that they cannot get that, because there is a financial problem in their health board. I have no doubt that the health board would wish to provide the facilities, but it cannot. The Auditor General for Scotland indicated in his recent report that he suspected that NHS Argyll and Clyde has a cumulative deficit of £70 million. In his judgment, that sum could not be retrieved. Given the fact that the health board's financial position is so precarious, the reality for the patients—and I am sure that the MS patients are only the tip of an iceberg in Argyll and Clyde—is an inevitable clinical impact. People there are not getting services because of the deficit that the health board faces.

I do not know whether there are structural reasons for Argyll and Clyde NHS Board having such a large deficit and I do not know what the answer is. I am sure that it must be very difficult for ministers to grapple with an over-committed and overspent health board. The bottom line is that the impact will be primarily on patients. If there is a squeeze, it is patients such as MS sufferers who will find that they do not have the services.

It is appalling that, in our civilised society, we cannot find the means to give those people whose quality of life has declined so rapidly and descended to such dreadfully low levels access to the neurological treatment, physiotherapy and medicines that they need. Some way has to be found of ensuring that a level playing field is created for people in such circumstances. As their time on this earth is limited, and as the quality of life for people whose disease progresses so quickly can diminish perilously fast, we must surely do something to ensure that, in their remaining years, they are surrounded by a care package and a level of provision that gives them a sufficient quality of life.

It cannot be acceptable any more for us to allow such variations to exist, whereby people in one area look in awe at what is available in another area and say, "Why can't we get this?" It is a challenge to our national health service for us to provide standards that are nationally determined, nationally validated and nationally sustained.

17:49

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Tom McCabe): Like other members, I begin by congratulating Tricia Marwick on securing a debate on this subject for the second time. I hope that the fact that we are debating the subject again goes some way to underline how seriously the Parliament takes this very important issue.

Tricia Marwick and other members have mentioned the work of the MS Society. On behalf of the Scottish Executive, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation of the role played by the voluntary sector, and by the MS Society in particular. It provides counselling and support for people with MS and their families, funds research into all aspects of the causes and possible treatments of MS, provides information services for health professionals, helps in the development of models of care and runs holiday respite homes. We cannot say often enough that its work is quite simply invaluable.

The Scottish needs assessment programme review report, which was published in late 2000, has been mentioned. It was initiated by an expert group of professionals appointed by the Public Health Institute of Scotland—which, as members know, is now part of NHS Health Scotland. The MS Society provided patient input to the assessment programme. On standards of care and in other aspects of service provision, the SNAP report concluded that there were wide variations in the accessibility and quality of care for patients with MS and that good standards of care were not being met throughout Scotland. It also made recommendations for improvements.

SNAP reports are intended to be tools for NHS boards to use in the planning of services. About 49 other SNAP reports, covering a wide range of conditions, have been published. It is understandable that the support groups for all those conditions would have liked the Executive to supervise the reports' implementation but, realistically, the Executive could not manage the implementation of 50 SNAP reports without making a major change to the way in which the national health service in Scotland is run. We are still convinced that service planning is best done locally.

David Davidson mentioned funding. Health boards are not left to muddle along with regard to funding. In recent years we have provided health boards with finance that is around twice the level of inflation, which is significant. The way in which we run the health service—this applies equally to some of Murray Tosh's comments—is that we leave service planning and decision making to be done locally. If members are saying that they want to change that radically, they should make that clear, but doing so would have a dramatic impact on the way in which health services are delivered throughout Scotland. We should be honest with ourselves, with the sufferers of a variety of conditions and with the support groups that, quite rightly, try to advance their cause.

Jeremy Purvis: Does the minister agree that a national standard of care would at the very least provide guidance and information to local boards about levels of co-ordination, service planning and delivery that would be required so that the eloquent examples that Murray Tosh gave of people experiencing postcode provision of care would not continue?

Mr McCabe: I will talk in more detail about the concept of the managed care networks later. I do not claim that the standards of care for people with MS are up to the SNAP recommendations, but I take issue with some of the comments that Tricia Marwick made about the lack of progress. There has been significant progress.

Margaret Ewing mentioned neurologists. Between 1999, when the SNAP working group was gathering information, and 2003, the number of neurologists in Scotland increased by 17 per cent. There are now nine more MS specialist nurses in post than there were in 2000.

Mrs Ewing: I have received a letter from Professor Charles Warlow of the Western general hospital in Edinburgh in which he points out that Scotland's neurologists are embarrassed by the waiting times for MS and sets out the differences between Scotland and Norway in this regard.

Mr McCabe: I regret the embarrassment that neurologists in Scotland have expressed. I have already said that there are more neurologists now than there were in 1999 and we will work to try to ensure that more are provided. However, the shortage of neurologists is not an exclusively Scottish problem; it is a problem throughout the United Kingdom and further afield. I hope that the neurologists do all they can in conjunction with the Scottish Executive and health professionals throughout Scotland to ease that embarrassment and to improve services for MS sufferers.

We are participating in the UK risk-sharing scheme and piloting managed care networks for multiple sclerosis. I want specifically to mention

the risk-sharing scheme, as it is important. Beta interferon has a unique history that has demanded a unique solution. Uncertainty about the use of the drug meant that many patients missed out on treatment. That is why the health departments and the drug companies agreed to make the drug available in an innovative risk-sharing scheme. All MS sufferers who are considered by their neurologist to be eligible for treatment are able to receive that treatment on the NHS. As a direct result of the scheme, many hundreds of patients in Scotland are now receiving drug treatment.

The scheme has benefited people with MS not just through their getting access to beta interferon, but through the creation of new clinics and an increase in the number of specialist staff. Assessing all potentially eligible patients is a major undertaking and neurology services have to carry out those assessments without disrupting the vital work that they do in other areas. Therefore, many boards had to make substantial investment in their neurology services. Although that meant that patients throughout Scotland could not be started on treatment simultaneously, the number of sufferers who are now on treatment proves that the investment that was made is achieving results.

The motion calls on the Executive to develop a national standard of care for MS. As members will know, that would be a task for NHS Quality Improvement Scotland. We created NHS QIS as an independent advisory body, and its work programme for the financial year 2004-05 is already committed. However, to begin developing standards, the Executive is funding a pilot MS managed care network in Forth valley that is led by a specialist nurse. NHS QIS will work with the Executive and NHS Forth valley to develop the quality assurance framework for the network. That will take account of advice from a wide range of sources and we hope that it will encourage future MS MCNs to adopt the NHS Forth Valley quality assurance template. The overall aim is to ensure consistency of standards throughout Scotland. We are keen to work with the MS Society and health and social care professionals to develop more MCNs. NHS Ayrshire and Arran is working up a business case for pump-priming funding for one MCN, and we would be happy to consider other proposals. We are about to write to NHS Argyll and Clyde, following its bid for an MCN, with a view to taking that bid forward.

The first draft of the English national service framework on long-term conditions, which focuses mainly on chronic neurological conditions, is due to be published later this year. We have always said that we will study the draft with interest, and we would encourage NHS QIS to take on that task and consider the possibility of including the development of clinical standards for neurological conditions in its work programme for 2005-06. The

final decision will rest with the NHS QIS board. NHS QIS will be helped in that task—if it is able to take it on—by the newly formed Scottish neurological alliance, which Susan Deacon referred to and which Malcolm Chisholm will launch later this month. The alliance is a group of voluntary organisations that support a substantial number of neurological conditions and which will work together towards common goals. The MS Society has played a major role in that very welcome development.

I genuinely congratulate Tricia Marwick on bringing this subject to the Parliament. I am glad to have had the opportunity to mark MS awareness week and to express the Executive's appreciation of the helpful and constructive contribution that the MS Society has made—and, I have no doubt, will continue to make—towards achieving the aim, which we all hold in common, of improving services for people with MS and similar chronic and enduring illnesses throughout Scotland.

I conclude by stressing that although we fully understand the severity of MS and fully appreciate the sincerity of the lobbying that the Executive receives in relation to the condition, we have to remember that there is a range of serious conditions for which people would like clinical standards, individual allocations of finance and specific responses. We need to take a wider approach to our health service in Scotland. That is not in any way to underestimate the seriousness of any condition; it is to say that we receive a range of requests for specific attention. As we run a health service that is devolved to the local level, and as we encourage health boards to develop services that address local needs, that conflict becomes ever more difficult to resolve.

Meeting closed at 18:00.

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